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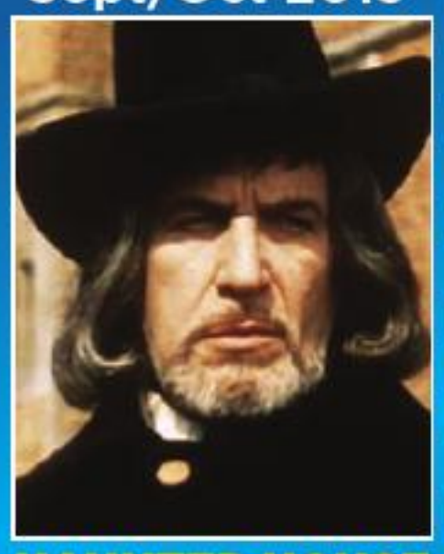

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THE DARK SIDE

The Magazine of the Macabre

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. . . and stay to shudder!
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AND
THE GHOUL
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Cult TV and retro horror...

Every time I produce a new issue of *Dark Side* I say to Yannie, "This has got to be the best one yet." She of course replies with a weary sigh, "But you always say that!" She's right, as of course women always are. But I say this: If a man stands in the middle of a forest and there's no woman to hear him, is he still wrong?

While you ponder that I'd like to welcome you to our biggest issue to date, and that's because we're giving you a free 32-page supplement on Cult TV alongside all the usual *Dark Side* goodies. My trusted advertising man Neville King, a legend in his own lunchtime, is behind this exciting new enterprise, along with former Network Distributing guru Hugh David, who knows everything there is to know about cult telly.

Cult TV TImes is already available as a free online publication but the guys plan to launch it as a print edition very soon. This special supplement is just a taster to test the market, and very tasty it is, too, as I'm sure you will agree.

As for the rest of the magazine, well yes, I know I'm biased, but I think it's the best thing since, well, toast. We're continuing our retro coverage of great old British horrors with the first part of John Hamilton's history of Tigon Films. John literally wrote the book on the subject so he's eminently qualified to deliver the definitive magazine article too, even though it had to be split in two because he wrote so much! If we'd published the full Tigon feature we wouldn't have had enough room for Denis Meikle's wonderfully nostalgic look back at the BBC2 Horror Double Bills that introduced so many of you to the joys of monster movies back in the 70s and 80s. As usual Denis has done his homework and delivered a superb, book-style piece that is very much the last word on the subject. Kudos also to designer Kev, who came up with the notion of that feature's great 70s-style opening spread. It took him ages decorating that living room, and then dear old Denis found us an image of a Sony C7 betamax player to literally complete the picture.

In last issue's editorial I mentioned how influential early horror books by the likes of Carlos Clarens and Dennis Gifford had been on myself and others at a young age. Denis Meikle says he too was inspired by the Clarens tome.

However, in this issue's *Post Mortem* pages, somebody brings up Alan Frank and his legendary horror books, which of course I should have mentioned also, not the least because Alan was and still is a mate of mine. When I was at a screening of an MGM musical DVD - can't remember the title - back in the 1980s, as I signed in I noticed that Alan Frank was in attendance. I asked PR girl Amanda Slayton - wonder where she is now? - to introduce me to him, because I was dying to meet one of Britain's biggest horror movie experts.

The moment I met Alan, a softly spoken, bearded South African with a wickedly dry sense of humour, I knew we were going to hit it off big time. I think he had recently been through a divorce and I wish I could remember all his vitriolic jokes about his ex-wife. The upshot was we became good friends and I used to visit him in his home at St. Margarets in Twickenham and we'd watch bad movies and have a right laugh. Then when I started *Dark Side* I brought him onboard as our regular film reviewer. Sadly for us he got too busy to carry on in the role, but we've remained friends and he still sends me a Christmas card.

Alan wrote loads of books on horror and still has a great career covering films for *The Daily Star*, but funnily enough, the thing that impressed me the most was when he told me he had been an extra in *Island of Terror,* in the scene where Edward Judd and Peter Cushing gather all the islanders in the town hall and tell them there are bone-sucking monsters on the loose. Alan says that they were all instructed to turn to each other and say "Rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb" during this scene and it always colours the way I view it now.

Here's another Alan Frank story, one that even Alan himself doesn't know, though he'll undoubtedly have a chuckle when he reads it. I never saw Alan drink anything but milk, because he told me had an ulcer, so I certainly never saw him intoxicated. Er, that is until the day he came over to mine and we were watching *Ape*, a truly daft *King Kong* ripoff. We used to cook meals for each other, but in this occasion I checked out the biscuit tin and saw it was full of home-made cheese straws. There were white ones and there were brown ones. I prefer unhealthy white bread, but ever-healthy Alan wanted brown. So he scoffed the brown ones, me the white. Now the film was laughably bad, but Alan seemed to be enjoying it in a more uninhibited manner than me. Later on, after he had gone home, my wife Lindy returned from work and saw the empty biscuit tin on the side. She seemed a bit shocked and asked why we'd eaten all the cheese straws. It was only then that I found out that my sister Gillian (sadly no longer with us) had baked up some hash straws that she'd left at our place - and Alan had unwittingly scoffed the lot!

Alan knows about it now because I showed him this editorial. He declined to comment. But I think it's safe to say that next time he comes round my place and I offer him something to snack on, he'll probably just say no.

Okay folks, that's quite enough rambling from me for now, and I'll leave you to get on with this bumper edition with my usual words of wisdom: Don't sweat the petty things, and don't pet the sweaty things.

Allan Bryce.

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Shock Starters

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James Kloda meets some of the filmmakers behind the ambitious compendium release, *The ABCs of Death.*

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Denis Meikle traces the history of the legendary BBC2 horror double bills that introduced so many British viewers to the best and worst of genre cinema.

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It's not a tiger and it's not a lion, it's a bit of both, really. Tony Tenser's Tigon Films come under the spotlight in John Hamilton's fascinating feature article.

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Nicky Henson was paid just £90 a week for starring in the cult British horror favourite, *Psychomania*. The film still comes back to haunt him, as he tells Simon Hooper...

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Readers rant or rave and we reply, it's as simple as that. What was that forgotten horror movie called? Write in and we might be able to help you.

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We offered our resident artistic genius Rick Melton a penny for his thoughts. When the answer came back, we demanded some change.

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ALPHABET of HORROR

James Kloda talks to some of the filmmakers behind *The ABC's Of Death*...

If *Hobo With A Shotgun* enters the *House Of The Devil* being chased by *Tokyo Gore Police,* the resulting *Kill List* is beyond *Macabre*, smashing new *Frontiers* in ambition, imagery and format.

An arch means to give a sense of the clash of styles on display perhaps, but no less so than the twisted smorgasbord that is *The ABC's Of Death*. Throwing up the visions of 25 established genre filmmakers from across the globe alongside that of Leeds-based animator Lee Hardcastle (aka Claycat), who won the competitive tender to craft an entry inspired by 'T', the collection is demented, offensive, philosophical: in short, utterly bipolar.

Each director was given a letter out of their choice of four, $5,000, and complete free rein to create a take on morbidity in around four minutes: there is chaff of course, but also golden wheat, and the sheer expanse of influence and gutsiness is admirable. To get a sense of the enterprise involved in the project, *The Dark Side* attempted to track down all the filmmakers involved: remarkably, three quarters responded. Prepare to get schooled in the ultimate spelling lesson...

A IS FOR APPEAL

What attracted you to such a wildly ambitious project?

Jason Eisener (*Y Is For Youngbuck*): I failed primary school because I spent more time playing with action figures rather than learning my ABCs. This was my chance for redemption.

Bruno Forzani/Hélène Cattet (*O Is For Orgasm*): We saw it fittingly as a cadavre exquis, a rotating corpse where each director was adding to the body as a whole without knowing what mutations or perversions had already been grafted on.

Timo Tjahjanto (*L Is For Libido*): The fact that I live in a country [Indonesia] where censorship rules are vague yet rife, I know that this film will never be distributed here, at least not legally.

O IS FOR OMNIBUS

Where does *The ABCs Of Death* fall into the anthology film tradition?

Lee Hardcastle (*T Is For Toilet*): When I were a teenager I couldn't afford proper albums by the bands I liked, so I used to get loads of cheap CD samplers from record labels. It's kinda like that: you buy the film knowing maybe two directors, but you end up discovering lots more.

Eisener: Watching this film feels like one of those nights where you and your friends stay up late showing each other crazy YouTube videos, have some drinks, practice wrestling moves on each other, or whatever you do. And the next day you feel really weird, but you got cold left-over pizza and it still tastes awesome.

Adrián García Bogliano (*B Is For Bigfoot*): You say this is a movie for the YouTube generation? I think it's for schizophrenics...

L IS FOR LETTER

Once you received your letter, how did you approach conceiving your response to the notion of death?

Thomas Malling (*H Is For Hydro-Electric Diffusion*): At first I planned on doing 'Combustion', as a 'When's-he-gonna-blow? Dramatic-irony-one-take-short.' and was about to ask for C. But, realizing that I would probably be wasting my time trying to get Christopher Walken to do it for free and have a fantastic finale with amazing effects, I threw that idea away and started over. The idea for 'H' hid in the bottom of a huge glass of wine in Washington...

Tjahjanto: I had always wanted to do a story about the depravity of modern society, the decadent and lethal lifestyle of the over-sexed bourgeoisie. When I received 'L', I thought I could easily use the letter to explore that deviance. I could have gone with '*Lesbian*' too, but I don't want that word to be associated with death. It's too much of a beautiful thing, haha!

Marcel Sarmiento (*D Is For Dogfight*): I approached it as a final moment between two unlikely adversaries. In a way, the death itself was not very interesting to me. Can a man fight a fierce dog in a backstreet boxing racket?

Nacho Vigalondo (*A Is For Apocalypse*): I had to think not just about the content. With *Apocalypse*, I am giving the audience the first shock, the first laugh, the first twist. My movie needed to work by itself, but also as a welcome to the whole.

M IS FOR MEDIUM

How did you achieve your ambitions on the limited budget given to you?

Kaare Andrews (*V Is For Vagitus*): Having no money is terrifying but also completely liberating. It's very Taoist, in a way. By having nothing, you have nothing to fear. Or something like that. For instance, I wanted a giant killer robot and a professional props builder told me he could do the job in two weeks with a team of 6 guys for $50K. So I made it in my basement out of foam floor pads for about 1/100th of the cost.

Andrew Traucki (*G Is For Gravity*): To save on resources, it was conceived as a single-take short, everything except

The ABC's of Death

Clockwise from top: *Z For Zetsumetsu (Extinction)*, *A for Apocalypse* **and** *J for Jidai-geki (Samurai Movie)*

the final shot filmed by myself with a Go-Pro camera. As I discovered, this is bloody hard to pull off when you are driving, walking and then paddling a surfboard. I live very close to the ocean and shot Gravity at my regular surfing spot, which is a bit weird because now when I go out I have a constant reminder of someone dying.

What are the pros and cons about working in the short film medium?

Simon Rumley (*P Is For Pressure*): It's the eternal question about short films: is the best the one with the twist in it or is it the one that evokes an atmosphere? I prefer those that live or die on their own merit. I was trying to tell a story as opposed to a one-off gag.

Sarmiento: It's very tough to give a satisfying narrative unless it ends with a jokey punchline. I wanted something with emotion, but that's hard to build in a few minutes. I got a headstart using a dog. There's so much built-in empathy already that a general audience can relate to. But the real story only developed as we got closer to starting shooting, and suddenly it was: 'Eureka! That's it! It's HIS DOG!'

P IS FOR PUNCHLINE

Some of the films have the construction of a clever joke: *Miscarriage* has a relatively mundane set-up before the 'gag' (in both senses of the word), whilst *Hydro-Electric Diffusion* has the mordant motto 'Keep Calm In Death' at its tail-end. What is the appeal of the twist or punchline in this set-up?

Ti West (*M Is For Miscarriage*): For mine, there isn't really a plot: it is just one sick joke that I hoped would get a huge groan from the audience. I think that separates it from most of the other letters, almost like an interlude. That's why I wanted to be in the middle. Originally there was a lot of plunging and embryo-type gore flying up on the actress, but as disgusting as that sounds, it ruined the punchline.

Malling: I desperately needed a 'UTF-moment' (Use-the-Force Luke) as a turning point. Playing around with well-known memes that support the tone of the short and maintain the simpleton discourse of a war-era propaganda piece, 'Keep Calm' seemed to fit the bill.

Jake West (*S Is For Speed*): A lot of our dream images tend to come from American cinema, which is what I turn to when I think of things in a fantasy context. The excitement of how everyone sees themselves as heroes in their own narrative, that 'live fast, die young'. Inevitably people are going to think when they start watching *Speed*, 'How are they going to die?' And then I wanted to wrong-foot them with something completely different, and that's the twist. The horror is that you realise these two gung-ho babes are actually junkies in a squalid fucking reality and it's all been mere escapism. The 'gag' becomes a play on the notion of addiction to speed: we're all hooked on cinema and need it to escape.

C IS FOR COITUS

Sex and death, traditional partners in crime, are explored in a number of the films. What makes such a union a good theme to deal with?

Forzani/Cattet: The mix between fear and desire creates a stronger tension and puts the audience in a strange place, not always comfortable, lost in attraction/repulsion. Like with our debut feature *Amer*, it allows us to create an allegoric world where violence increases the sensations and becomes abstract, surrealistic. Nearly poetic.

Tjahjanto: I think the subject of death becomes more accessible and less dreary when you confront it with a sense of adventure, and sex is the main aspect that allows this. One should never judge as we all have our own kinks, but it's one of those themes that should remain a fantasy: we as humans are such fucked-up, unbalanced beings. You'll find pictures of a woman whose headless body was desecrated by this death-metal nutjob in Germany. That's scary shit when it's reality.

D IS FOR DUNG

Both the animations concern darkly hilarious scatological encounters. If we have sex and death, another common theme is death and shit. What of it?

Anders Morgenthaler (*K Is For Klutz*): I wanted to do something to make people laugh. And poo is our generation's banana...

Hardcastle: I settled on the toilet as I thought it would be a really cool location. And it weren't that abstract neither: I like the simplicity of a death by toilet. It's just gonna happen.

Morgenthaler: You know, we are people who like dirty secrets, so poo comes easy because it's possibly the dirtiest one. I thought, let's gross out on a subject that is so private. Women on the loo is the one thing men don't want to go into. It's horror for them.

Hardcastle: A big part of *Toilet* is the boy's parents getting killed in his dream, like ones I had when I were a kid, getting eaten by aliens or something. I spoke to my teacher at school and he said it's a very common dream, about getting away from your folks. So it all tied together: potty-training, breaking from your family. It's about a sense of independence. Plus I just think toilet's a beautiful word.

T IS FOR TASTE

The ABC's Of Death gloriously straddles the range of bad taste: Libido's masturbation contests featuring disability, paedophilia and chainsaws; *Pressure*'s intense imagery of a kitten crushed to death. Were you ever worried about accusations of going too far, and what does 'bad taste' mean to horror cinema anyway?

Tjahjanto: What I have shown in *Libido* is so goddamn tame compared to what we can see on the net today. There's some gnarly shit out there, stuff that will definitely shackle and question us about the state of humanity today. If my episode's hard to stomach for people,

then I think I did my job. There's a difference if I glorify it of course. But a bit of bad taste, I would call it an 'exploration of taboo', is a requirement for the audience to evaluate and explore unconventionality. Because who really wants to stay in their little box of security all the time? I'll tell you who. Mostly boring and dull people.

Rumley: When it comes down to it, it's pretty basic: it's the fetishisation of women and legs and feet culminating in the destruction of a helpless animal. It's not far-fetched to imagine that it became an online, underground phenomenon, that of the 'crush' videos. Shock comes with contextualisation. A lot of people dismissed *Pressure* because it had animal cruelty in it, whilst remaining ignorant of the source inspiration. Who are these film watchers to come up with this perverted, skewed morality on something which is reflecting, actually, a part of our existence?

Eisener: I'd rather the audience not trust me as a filmmaker: I'm not afraid to take you down the alley everyone says not to go down. I don't think I'm doing anything that's in bad taste anyway. Bad taste is putting a Nu-Metal song on a soundtrack and thinking it's cool.

B IS FOR BURLESQUE

The ABC's Of Death I can best describe as a surrealist burlesque: for example, the heightened giallo synaesthesia of *Orgasm* nestles perversely with the *Spitting Image*-style animal caricature of *Hydro-Electric Diffusion*. Did you see the project as an opportunity to play with more radical and outré stylisation?

Malling: I wanted to do a live-action 1940s cartoon slapstick. Back then, technical terms that today are considered old-fashioned seemed quite the rave. You know, 'Radium', 'X-Rays': it was a time of technological optimism. To me, it seemed funny to take Nazi face-melting, which wasn't called anything particular in the 1936 world of *Raiders of the Lost Ark,* and attempt to give it a 'scientific' name related to the era. By the way, the first situation I storyboarded was the moment when the dog's bollocks shoot out of his mouth.

Forzani/Cattet: We see our movies as experiences, like a dive in a universe that doesn't exist. To give the impression that it's real we try to make the audience 'feel' it. We approach filmmaking in a very instinctive, sensual way. In the case of *Orgasm,* strong colour is used for the depiction of an inside consciousness. We created the sound design by an association of ideas with the images we shot, not just illustrating them with their 'natural' sound. For instance, the main effect used when the exhaled bubbles explode is a whip.

Tjahjanto: The 'eye-gina' and winking deer-head you see in *Libido* are nods to that notion of 'when you wank too much you'll see stars and butterflies.' But towards the end, our protagonist is approaching that line where everything is nauseating and hallucinatory: he can't get excited at the horrors in front of him. In a sense, the deer is just a greeting from the devil calling, "Your time is up ..."

E IS FOR EXPERIMENT

The word 'arthouse' has been used to describe this anthology in part. Did you ever worry that you were being too oblique within the context of the project, one where the balance would almost certainly tip toward the bloody, visceral extreme?

Traucki: I guessed that everyone would be doing gore, so I said, 'Bugger it, I'm not going to attempt that.' *Gravity* is actually based on a true story which has always stayed with me. I was going for a more meditative, lyrical piece that would be out of balance with the films around it. Risky thing to do, but hey...

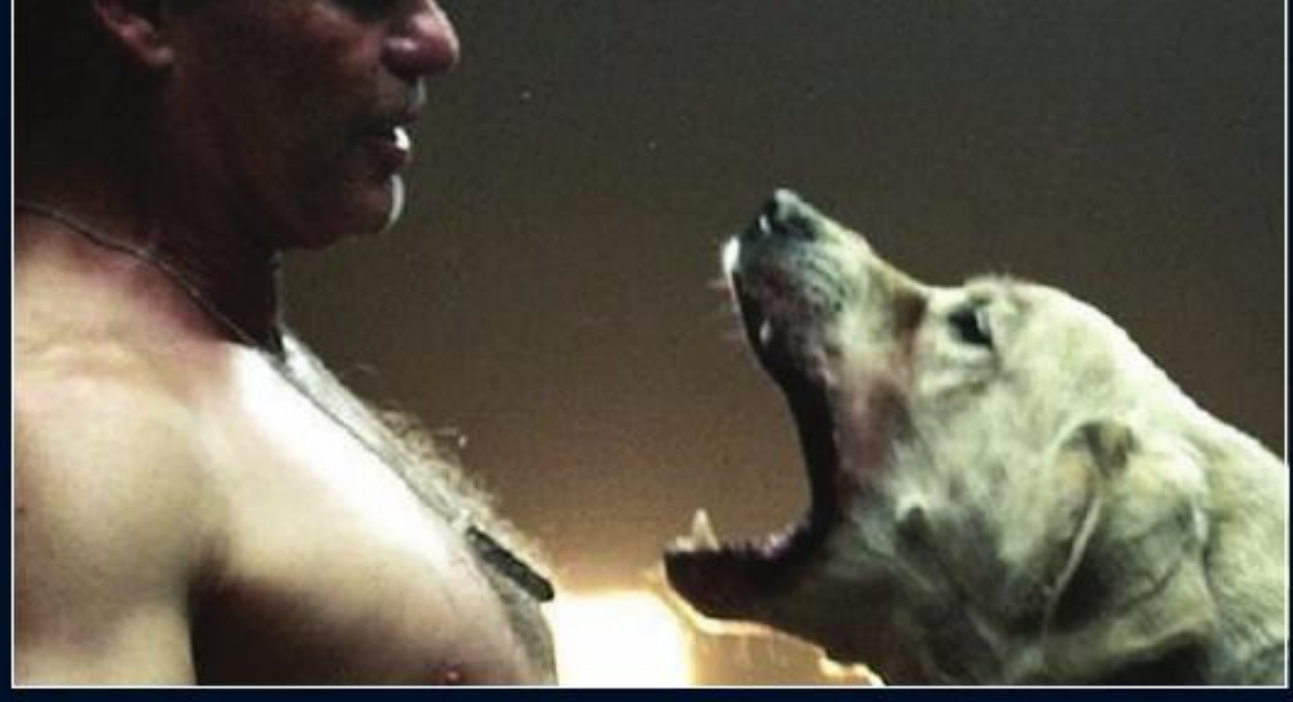
Rumley: It goes back to the definition of horror: I was reading Hitchcock the other day and he said, "Horror is to be found in the absolutely normal." Vampires, werewolves and those trick-or-treat tropes are all fine and good. Yet when I saw those 'crush' videos on YouTube, I was mind-blown as to (a) why anyone would want to watch an animal being squashed to death and (b) why someone would do it. For me, the horror was focusing on a working prostitute that has to do something like this to provide further for her children. That may not appeal to your average 18 year-old genre fan, but it was far more interesting to explore.

Vigalondo: When you make a short story titled *Apocalypse* but don't show cities burning or rivers of blood, there are some out there who are going to feel cheated. And that´s a legitimate feeling.

S IS FOR SATIRE

With such despairing visions as the multi-media, meta-mind-melt of *WTF?!?*, like *8 1/2* on acid for the attention-deficient generation [with zombie clowns!], to the bleakly conceptual Removed, I

Clockwise from top left: *T for Toilet,* Storyboard comparison for *H for Hydro-Electric Diffusion,* and *L for Libido*



Clockwise from top: *L is for Libido, D is for Dogfight, X is for XXL*, Some of director Lee Hardcastle's other work (he made *T is for Toilet)* and *S is for Speed*

couldn't help but think of Lord Byron's quote, "Let satire be my song." How far is your film articulating personal concerns?

Jon Schnepp (*W Is For WTF?!?*): I think there's such overwhelming noise around us, and we choose what to filter and let in, or so we think. We're constantly inundated with graphics, sound, information, texts, IMs, and you'd think we would have melted down by now. Everywhere we turn there's a new doomsday prediction, celebrity endorsement, mash-up explosion, or new way to die. We love this, embrace it, can't seem to get enough of our own imminent non-existence, can't slow down long enough to stop evaporating our own atmosphere as we chug the last drop of bottled water that will be the next upcoming war zone. We blink and will soon be in a padded computer cell of our own fucking design.

Malling: I guess there is an attempted satirical point in my short. Put simply, it's the same one that's made whenever *The Simpsons* has us laughing at *Itchy & Scratchy*, reminding us of the dilemma of combining violence with mainstream children's entertainment, like those old MGM cartoons. That said, I don't have an issue with it whatsoever: the real one is the hypocrisy of those who raise any problem.

Srdjan Spasojevic (*R Is For Removed*): The main character in my film is THE FILM itself, portrayed through the flesh and blood of a human being. Used, abused and tortured in so many ways, Film is trying to free itself, to save its own existence and restart by remaking the first movie ever shot: that of the train entering the station. We are all part of that crime.

I IS FOR INFANCY

Amongst death's more expected thematic counterparts, faeces and fucking, there is another prevalent, and more troubling, motif, that of children being confronted with death or a particularly lethal legacy. How cautionary are your tales for the next generation?

Bogliano: I wanted to make a creepy bedtime tale because there is a sad element related to how children are conditioned to respond to certain things. A lot are educated in fear and that's upsetting. Parents try many times to draw their kids into corny, clichéd stories for different selfish reasons.

Andrews: When I was writing *Vagitus,* I sort of let myself go. I had just become a father and wanted robots and mutants and explosions. But I began to think of the interrelationship between birth and death while I created the theatrical poster for *The ABC's Of Death*. Yup, that's my artwork and the same child featured on the publicity is the one in my segment, my first born Casey Andrews. Having a baby is a life-altering process. And I have friends that have struggled with having kids of their own, and that struggle is as equally life-altering. The urge to procreate is as human and primal as it gets. But what do you do in a world that is growing as quickly and becoming dangerously overwhelmed as our own? I have no answers. But to tell stories, I need only questions.

Eisener: It's simple: don't teach kids to kill things! My young protagonist goes through some pretty harsh life lessons. Maybe he becomes an anti-hero. For me *Youngbuck* is about respecting life: don't hurt living creatures. Unless you fake it in a movie.

F IS FOR FEAR

Perhaps ultimately, what links the segments of *The ABC's Of Death*, in both its form and content, is being trapped in a cycle of death. Assuming that we want to, how do we break this?

Ernesto Díaz Espinoza (*C Is For Cycle*): This is something that happens to us in several layers. Sometimes in nightmares, sometimes during weird experiences in reality that you cannot explain, all of them related to fear. Fear is the demon. If you stop for a moment and look into your life, you'll find that you are inside a cycle. When you become aware of that, you try to get out, but a couple of days later you're inside again. People eternally confront themselves to attempt escape, but they never do...

Schnepp: With the melding of technology into our day-to-day life, our own flesh tied to the internet, minds crammed with information that stops what used to be important getting inside, everything is flushed into a mega-swamp of useless trash.

We have been kilned proper, and now we need to break that mould and see what seeps out from under the grating. In order to see the new us.

The ABC's Of Death is out now on DVD/Blu-Ray by Monster Pictures.

POST MORTEM

If you have something you want to get off your chest, don't be afraid to scream at us about it! Send your bouquets or brickbats to Post Mortem, The Dark Side, 29 Cheyham Way, South Cheam, Surrey SM2 7HX. Or e-mail us at: **Allan@thedarksidemagazine.com**

Dear Allan,

I've been reading your magazine now for over 10 years so I thought it was about time I dropped you a line! Thank you for keeping the British end up (so to speak) all these years. It was a sad day when it looked like *The Dark Side* was no more, but since rising from the grave the magazine has gone from strength to strength and has never looked better .

I am really looking forward to your feature on the old BBC 2 horror double bills. These were my initiation into the horror world, along with Allan Franks wonderful horror film books. I used to record the double bill and get up extra early on the weekend before my parents woke to see what treasures I could uncover each week, cowering behind the sofa!

I also really enjoyed your articles in the last issue on Oliver Reed, the groovy *Dracula AD 1972* and also the features on Chow Yun Fat and Sammo Hung (The Hong Kong action films of the 80 and 90s were amazing and I really must update my collection and get some of these films on Blu-ray!)

The horror genre has always been a massive part of my life. I liken it to going to a theme park and seeking out the most hair-raising rides, always pushing myself to seek out the next film that will scare the hell out of me. I was very lucky to have 2 older brothers who are 15 years my senior and grew up at the time of the video nasties. I have very fond memories of making the pilgrimage to the numerous independent video shops down my local high street. I could stare at the lurid artwork on the boxes for hours!

As you're well aware, the films themselves did not always live up to artwork depicted It is good to see that over the last year there has been a bit of a revival of the old artwork used in film covers and posters, as I was getting very bored of the unimaginative floating heads.

I remember very fondly the day my brother introduced me to Vincent Price in *Theatre of Blood*. I must have rented this film 100 times, to the point of wearing the tape out! After this I sought out all of Mr Price's films. *Theatre of Blood* has, however, remained my all time fave (with *The Wicker Man* and *Blood on Satan's Claw* snapping at its heels). I still love trying to spot the London locations used. I finally saw *Theatre of Blood* on the big screen as a double bill with Hammer's first *Dracula* outing a few years back, where Mark Gatiss was present and talked fondly of the old BBC double bills and Alan Frank books also.

The main thing I love about horror though is its diversity, and I've loved discovering new subgenres throughout the years. Whereas the Universal monsters and Hammer horror films petrified me as a child, I soon became immune to them and looked at them in more of a loving nostalgic way, instead of being frightened by them. I then discovered Amicus and this threw my world upside down, as in their films good did not always triumph over evil, and once the credits rolled it left you with a feeling of unease.

After watching *Friday the 13th* I became obsessed with slasher films and especially anything featuring the effects work of Tom Savini. Then there was Romero doing his thing and getting me into zombie films. Argento, Fulci and Bava had me baying for blood with their splatter epics.

Then there were the giallos, like *House of the Laughing Windows,* and *The Ring* and the ghosts with long dark hair J-horrors. The list is endless!

And just when I finally thought I was immune to the effects of the horror film along come *Martyrs* and *A Serbian Film* to mess with my head on a whole new level. Now having a family of my own these films are all too real-life, and too close for comfort for me. They are a far cry from the Universal/Hammer monsters!

I could rabbit on for hours about my love of the genre, as you can probably tell. Thanks for letting me take a trip down memory lane. Best wishes to you, Yannie and the rest of the *Dark Side* family.

Lee Griffiths, by email.

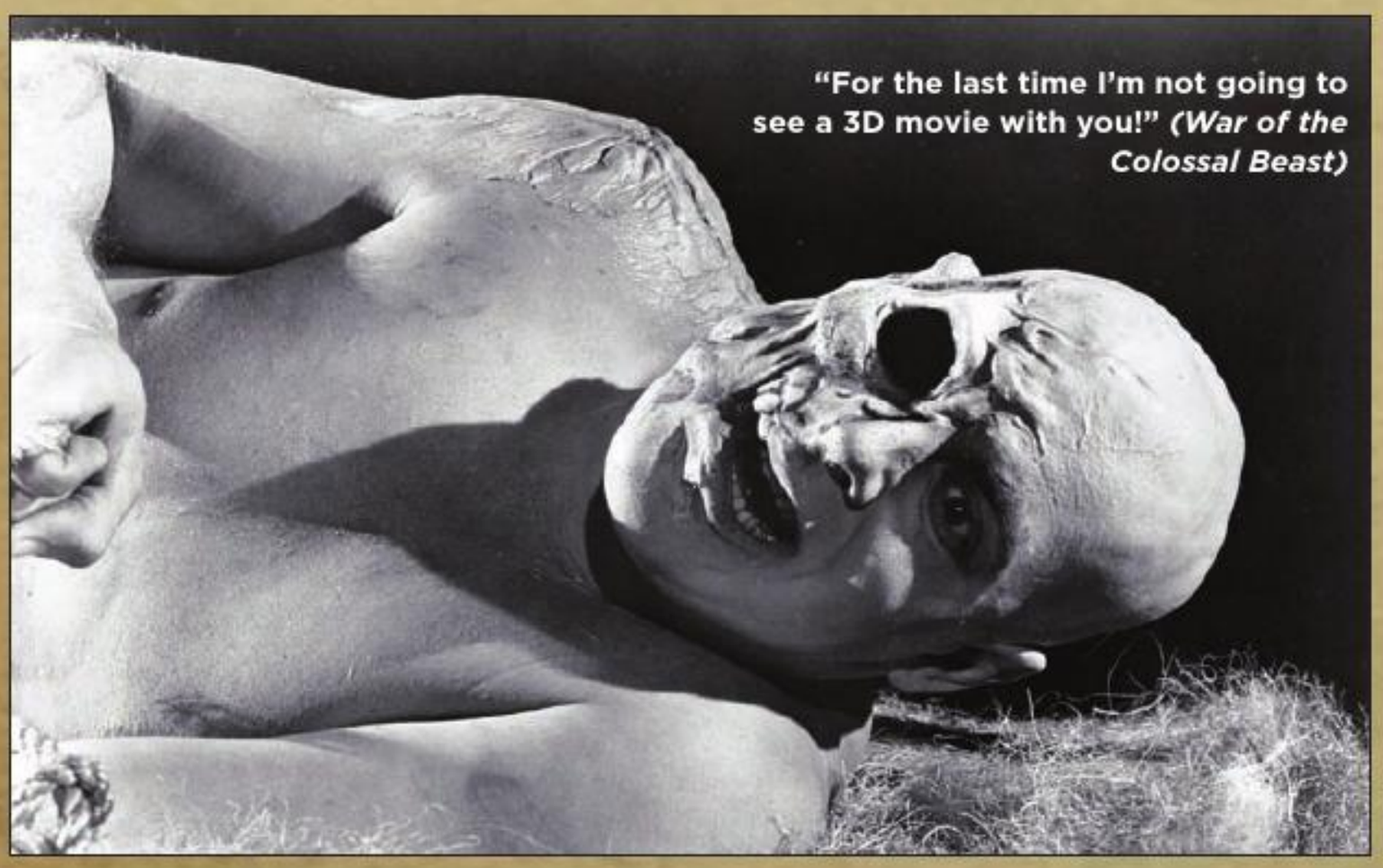
Thanks Lee, I think you've summed up the experiences of a great many of our readers there. I'm glad we finally got round to doing something on the BBC2 horror doubles and you can bet your life it won't be the last time you'll be hearing about Video Nasties in these pages - it's a subject that just won't stay dead and buried - thank goodness!

Dear Allan,

Thank you and friends for the magazine, it's a great read etc. I really enjoyed Denis Meikle's Oliver Reed and *Dracula AD 1972* pieces in the current issue.

I'm driven to write you, though, about something I'd love to see covered. I'm rather fascinated by the voice-over artists who dubbed so many Italian horror/exploitation movies of the 1970s and '80s into English. I've found it very difficult to glean much about who they are. Are most of them embarrassed by their participation?

I did manage to email one of them via her current business website, but she said she thought she was "meant to remain anonymous" and seemed not too keen to talk about it (and I didn't want to appear too stalky-scary!). It's a shame if that is the case, because they're unsung heroes as far as I'm concerned. To me, the bizarre translations add another layer of enjoyment to these already frequently insane films. I would love to know if it was the voice actors who translated/finalised the dialogue. They



"For the last time I'm not going to see a 3D movie with you!" *(War of the Colossal Beast)*

must have had a great time doing it and the peculiar wording must surely have been to amuse themselves. Lines like "This is all the whisky you possess?!" (*A Blade In The Dark*) or exchanges like "...but John, I..." "No, Liza - I'm a doctor and I won't accept irrational explanations!" (*The Beyond*)... Well, they don't seem so funny in print, but that's the point (I think).

The best source I've found so far on this subject is a page or two about ADR editor/voice of Brian in *Zombie Flesh Eaters,* Nick Alexander. But it wasn't enough! So a thorough piece (or book) about this is all I want for Christmas.

Much love, gratitude and keep up the dirty work,
Kieron Hall, by email

I agree it's a fascinating and often hilarious subject, Kieron. I hope you enjoyed the vintage interview with Nick Alexander that I mailed you - we ran that donkey's years ago in the mag and it's a bit too old to reprint. I'll look around and see if we can get hold of an update.

Dear Allan,
Just finishing issue 153 and thought I would show my true age by directing readers to *Dark Side* issue number 31 for a fantastic tribute to Jess Franco by yourself and Cathal Tohill.

This sits nicely alongside your tribute in the current issue to show an honest appreciation of a flawed director but a director who loved his craft rather than loving the income generated from his craft.

Personally I found his output entertaining and tedious in equal measures but admired his work ethic and quantity rather than quality but it as always worth a look.

Just a quick comment on the mag as a whole please do not go down the route of *Fangoria* a few years ago when they decided to write articles on past gems. These in general have been done to death and I want to hear about new movies and up and coming directors. In general though you have the balance right at the moment and the old movies seem to consist of classic but rarely covered fare such as *Cat in the Brain* which I enjoyed immensely.
Dean Temple by email

As you'll note, Dean, we do try and mix it up so that we cover new films both in the review section and features/interviews, as you will note from this issue's stuff on *Sawney* and *The ABCs of Death*. I personally prefer the older stuff and a lot of our regular readers do also if the exceptionally high sales of our Amicus and Hammer issues are anything to go by. I'm also lucky to have great writers aboard who specialise in this stuff, and I do think we've got the balance about right.

Dear Allan,
Has anybody noticed how there has been a tendency for horror film titles to get shorter and shorter over the years? For example, in the 1940s and 50s cinemagoers had it all spelled out for them with such mouthfuls as *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man, I Walked With a Zombie, The Curse of the Cat People,*

"Okay, you can wear the hoodie to school, dear." *(The Incredibly Strange Creatures etc)*

The Creature from the Black Lagoon, Invasion of the Body Snatchers and *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*. Hammer continued this long-winded trend into the early 1970s with *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell* and *Blood from the Mummy's Tomb.*

In the 70s and 80s, however, whole sentences were considered unnecessary when just a couple of words would suffice. Hence *The Exorcist, The Omen, The Shining, The Howling, The Awakening, The Entity, The Legacy, The Fury, The Fog, The Thing* and *The Beyond* to name a few.

In the last ten years or so it seems that even two words have been regarded as overly descriptive. Cue *Saw, Hostel* (you can't mention one without the other), *Insidious, Sinister, Audition, Devil, Severance, Evidence, Creep, Frozen, Reeker, Slither, Wilderness, [Rec], V/H/S* and even *F*!

What next, a single punctuation mark? Maybe they won't be called anything and we'll be expected to make up our own one-word titles. In which case can we expect to see such genre defining classics as *Tedious, Obvious, Ridiculous, Uninspired, Unsubtle, Uninvolving, Derivative, Forgettable* and *Moribund* taking pride of place on our DVD shelves in the not too distant future? Gawd 'elp us.
Howard Webb, by email.

Great letter, Howard, had me chuckling. You're right of course, but I'd never really thought about it until now. I yearn for the days of *The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living And Became Mixed-Up Zombies,* but that must have been hell to put on a marquee!

Dear Allan,
As an avid reader of your magazine I am continually impressed with your magazine's diversity, covering everything from classic Hammer horror to grindhouse and stalk 'n' slash cheapies. However, my particular passion is for Hammer, and I was pleasantly surprised by your piece on *Dracula AD 1972.* A retrospective insight into one iconic horror film or cult favourite of the 60s or 70s each issue would be a very welcome addition.

I would like to see an appraisal of *Dracula Has Risen From The Grave* or even the much-maligned *Mummy's Shroud.* After reading your interviews with Hammer starlet Linda Hayden I would suggest similar treatment for Veronica Carlson or even the elusive Susan Denberg - supposedly now residing in Klagenfurt.

On reflection, I think *The Dark Side* achieves the right balance between new releases and golden age horror, especially with the DVD Library segment.

After the Hammer and Amicus issues perhaps we could have a mini-history of Tyburn, since *The Ghoul, Legend of the Werewolf* and *Persecution* have a respectable cult following.
Philip Carroll, Birmingham.

I think it's safe to say we will be doing a Tyburn piece in the near future, Philip, though some weird copyright problem prevents their films from being widely available on DVD. The studio was of course the brainchild of Freddie Francis's son Kevin. I have to admit to having a bit of a soft spot - probably between my ears - for *The Mummy's Shroud* too, since it was the first horror film I ever saw in a cinema - on a double bill with *Frankenstein Created Woman*. It would be great to get an interview with Susan Denberg, but I think that is probably beyond us. I'm pretty sure we could track down Veronica though because she's a regular at horror conventions. I'm also all for getting Denis to do features on other specific Hammer horrors, but he's busy with his company, Hemlock Books, and beavering away on other subjects for us - look out for his fabulous feature on the great cinema horror double bills of the 50s, 60s and 70s in our next issue.

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HORRORS! OF BRITISH CINEMA

When man was given mastery over the beasts, someone forgot to tell
Link
15
DVD
THORN EMI SCREEN ENTERTAINMENT Presents A RICHARD FRANKLIN Film
Starring ELISABETH SHUE • TERENCE STAMP
15

ON DVD NOW

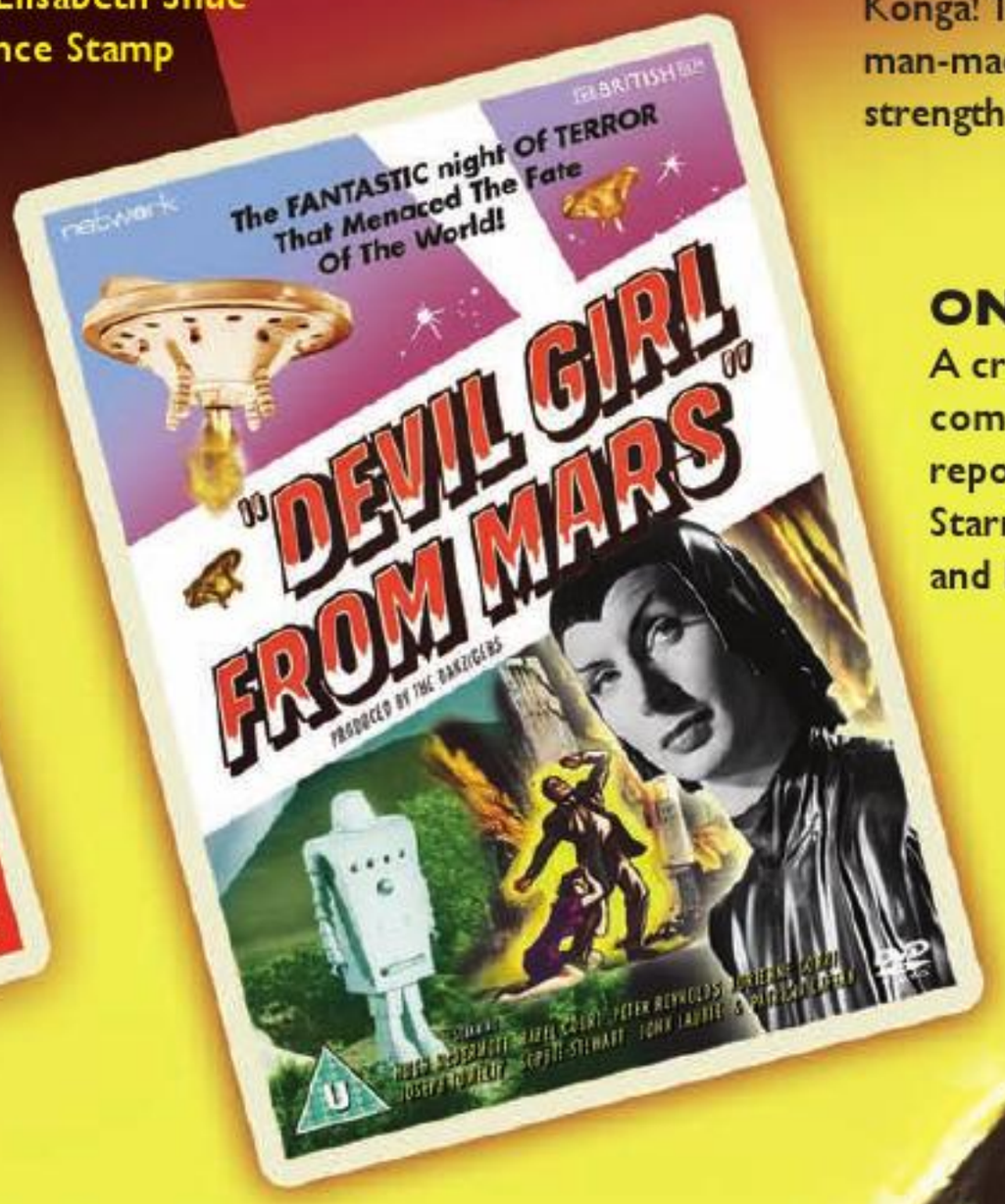
When man was given mastery over the beasts, someone forgot to tell…LINK! Starring Elisabeth Shue and Terence Stamp

ON DVD NOW

Konga! The ever-growing man-made beast of immeasurable strength! Starring Michael Gough

ON DVD NOW

If you dare, look around this chamber of horrors! Starring Michael Gough



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SHRIEKS ON A SUMMER NIGHT

Denis Meikle remembers BBC2's legendary Horror Double Bills...

At 10.30pm on Saturday June 28, 1980, the orange computer-generated logo of BBC2 dissolved into that of Columbia Pictures, accompanied in this instance by the opening bars of Clifton Parker's ominous score for *Night of the Demon*. Director Jacques Tourneur's classic occult thriller from 1957 gave an auspicious start to a late-night fright-fest of films on a minority channel that was still trying to reach more decisively into the mainstream, not only because this *sixth* season of same had been accorded the distinction of a cover on that week's *Radio Times* but because the corporation had bowed to the inevitable over what was now an annual event which previously had been transmitted under pretentious guises like 'Masters of Terror' and 'Dracula, Frankenstein and Friends' and finally adopted the moniker by which they had all become more commonly known since their inauguration in 1975 – the 'Horror Double Bill'.

Auspiciousness was not restricted to the Beeb's choice of opener for the new season, either. Unlike past outings for *Night of the Demon*, this latest print reinstated all of the footage which Columbia had seen fit to cut for its abridged American theatrical release of the film as co-feature to *The Revenge of Frankenstein* 27 years before and which had then become the mainstay of subsequent television transmissions. If that were not enough, it could also be *recorded* for personal archiving and later re-viewing all over again.

How so? In the interval between the BBC's fourth season of double-bills and its sixth, a technological revolution had taken place and videocassette recorders, or 'VCRs', had hit the domestic marketplace. Early adopters of the system had paid the best part of £1000 for a piano-key Sony or Mitsubishi unit but, in 1979, Dutch electrical giant Philips Eindhoven had launched the N1700 and its corporate tie-in with high street TV rental company Visionhire had opened up an entry-level market to the public at large for a monthly fee; by 1980, two formats were set to dominate the field – VHS in the hardware form of Matsushita affiliates JVC, Panasonic and more, and Betamax, proprietary format of the groundbreaking Sony C7 wonder-machine with its 14-day time-shift ability, slo-mo playback and wireless remote control. Horror film fans of 1980 were not only the recipients of a dedicated late-night slot on British television – for the first time ever, they could also *collect* the films which featured on it (albeit technically illegally at the time!).

Of such things are memories made. Gone were the days when the only way to own a part of a favourite fright film was to purchase an 8mm (or Super 8mm) projector and follow that by shelling out for a cut-down version from Derann's catalogue of the handful of features which grudging film companies had allowed onto the open market, *Curse of the Demon*, *The Giant Claw* and *The Revenge of Frankenstein* among them, all in 200ft, 10-minute abridgements. Now, anyone could record anything that was transmitted on television, and television transmitted a *lot* of horror films during the 1980s. But the double-bills in which BBC2 currently specialised had actually commenced in 1975, at a time when someone in the corporation decided that horror was something which the previously-staid Beeb should start to look at more sympathetically.

All photographs supplied by Denis Meikle
(and that's what his lounge looks like today)

THE INCREDIBLE
SHRINKING MAN
GRANT WILLIAMS · RANDY STUART

YOUR FAVORITE CREEPS TOGETHER AGAIN!
CREEPY TERRORS

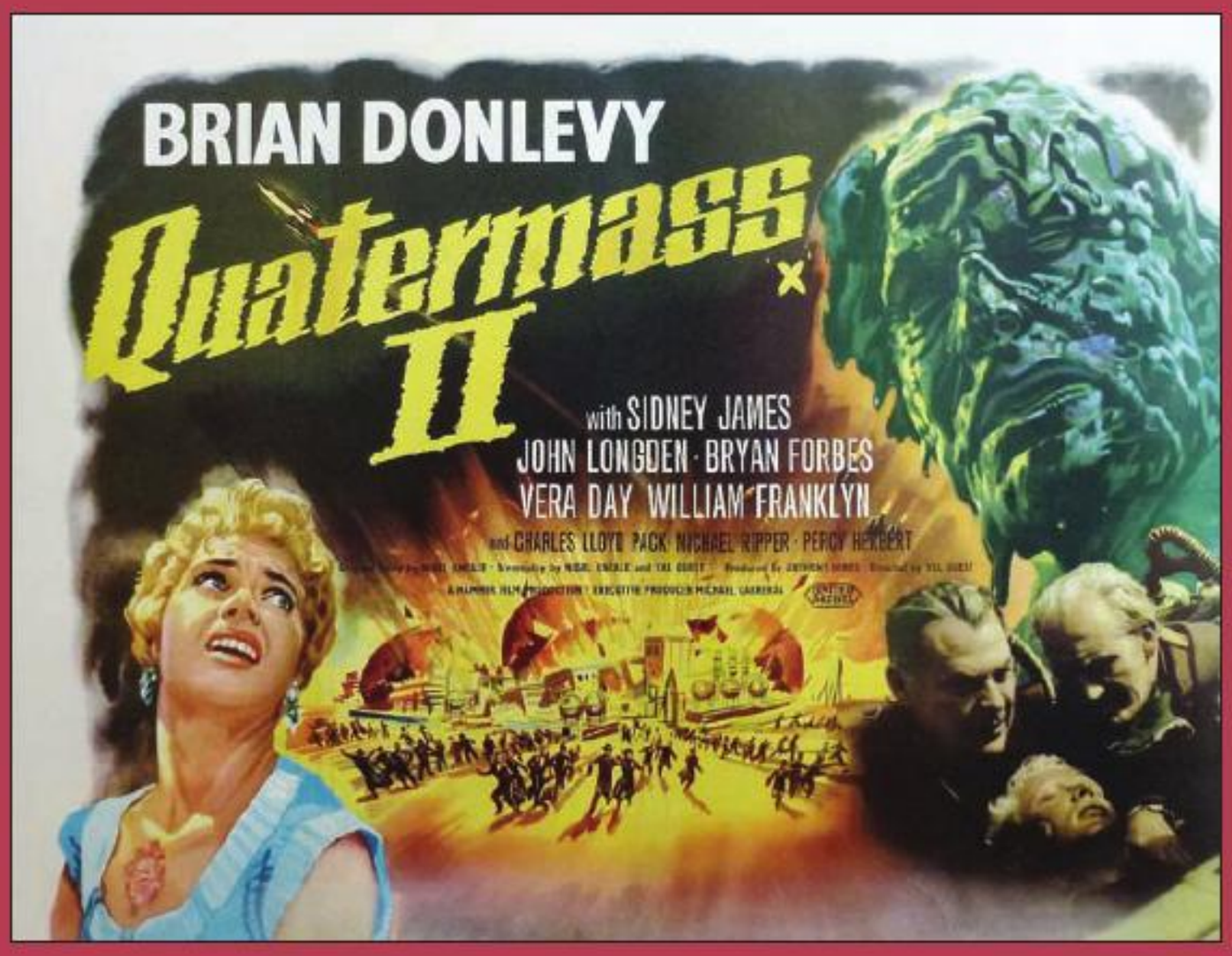
PETER CUSHING
LEGEND OF THE WEREWOLF
RON MOODY
HUGH GRIFFITH
ROY CASTLE

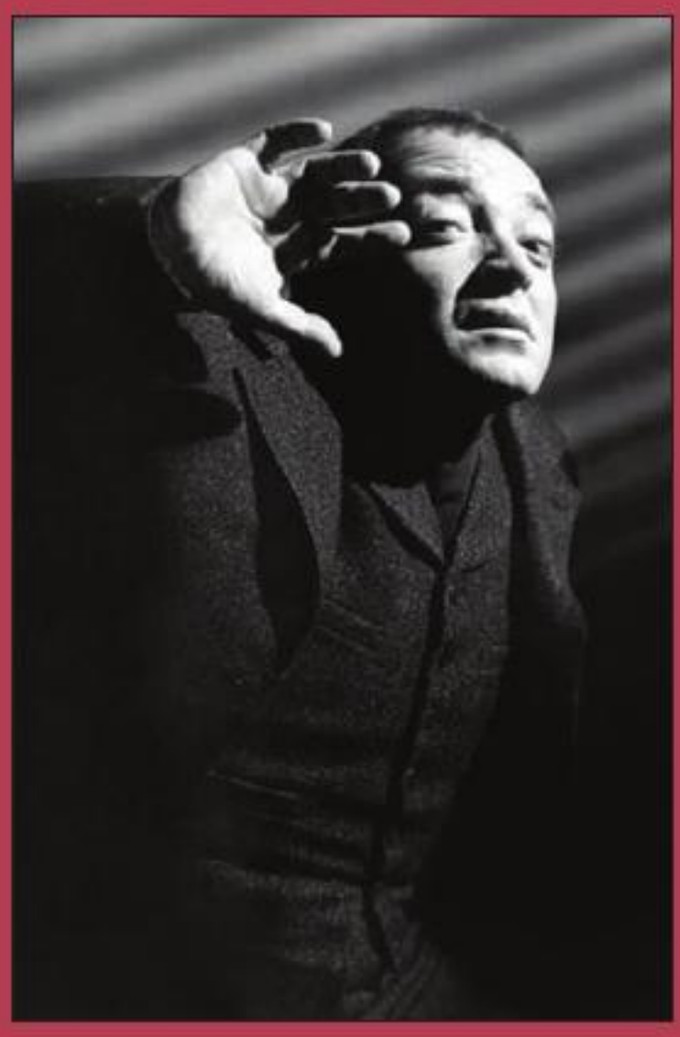
Chosen... singled out to die... victim of his imagination or victim of a demon?

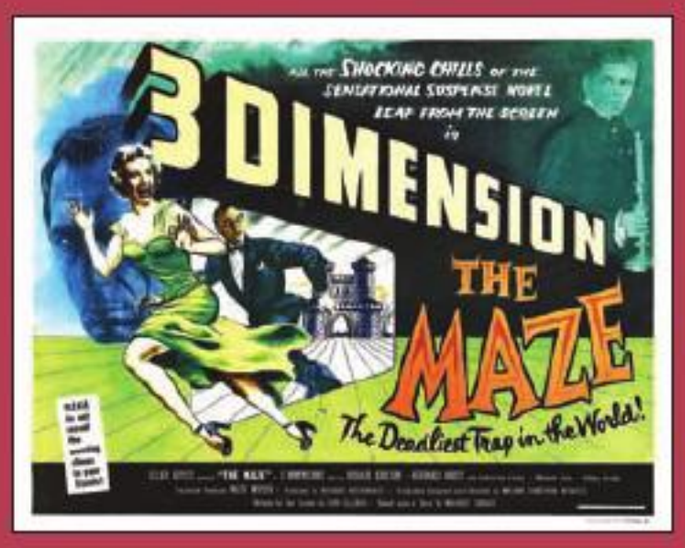
HORROR SPECIAL
Radio Times

Radio Times

Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari
FILMSCHAUSPIEL in 6AKTEN · REGIE: ROBERT WIENE · HAUPTDARSTELLER: WERNER KRAUS · CONRAD VEIDT · FRITZ FEHER · LIL DAGOVER ·


BRIAN DONLEVY
Quatermass II
with SIDNEY JAMES
JOHN LONGDEN · BRYAN FORBES
VERA DAY WILLIAM FRANKLYN
and CHARLES LLOYD PACK · MICHAEL RIPPER · PERCY HERBERT





Above:
The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari
Right:
Peter Lorre in *The Beast With Five Fingers*

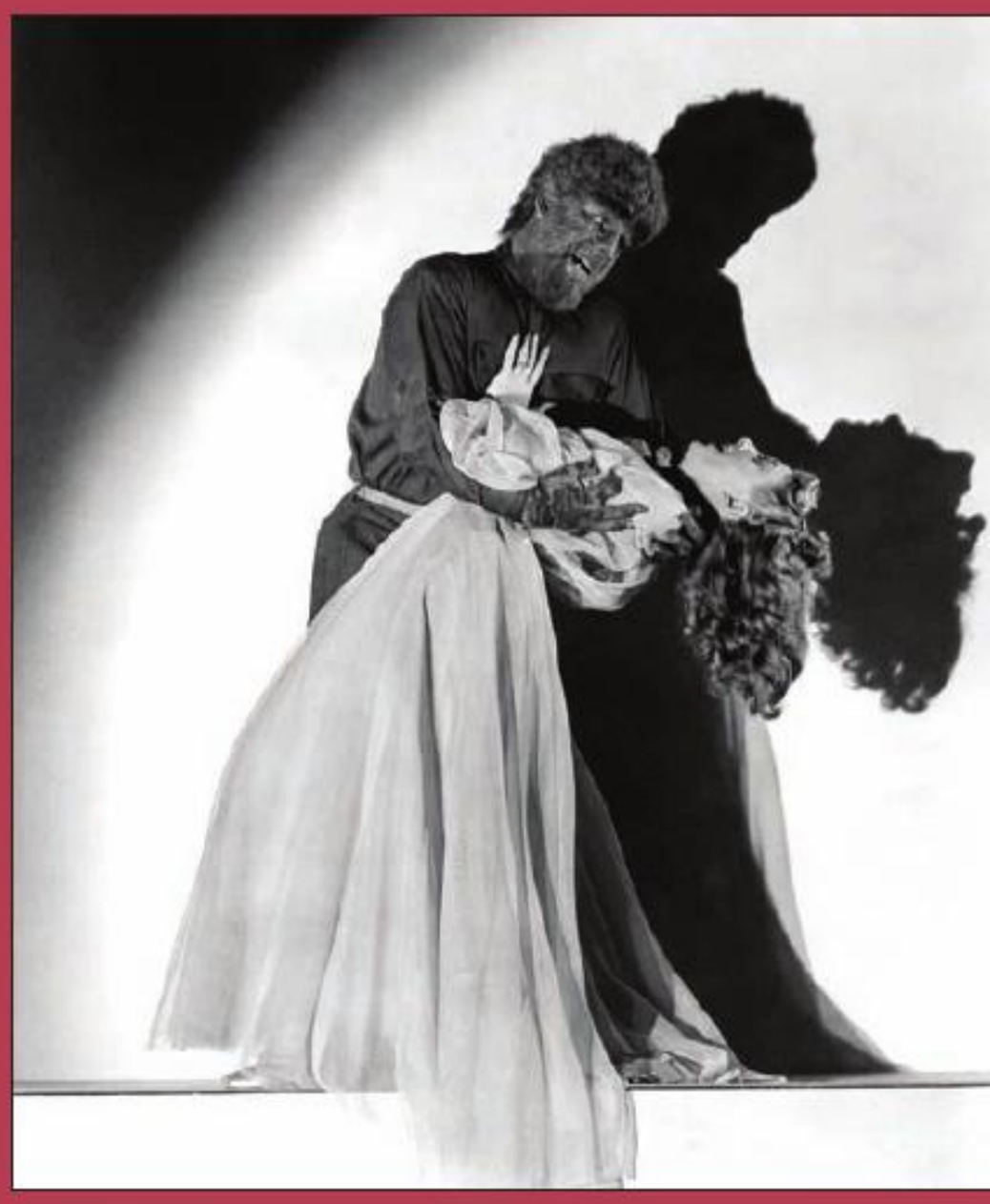
On Christmas Eve 1971, BBC1 had played host to what would also become an annual event – as *A Ghost Story for Christmas* – by showing 'The Stalls of Barchester (Cathedral)', an adaptation by Lawrence Gordon Clark of the MR James short story of (almost) the same name. This was followed a year later by the equally unsettling 'A Warning to the Curious', as well as six more of varying degrees of effectiveness through to 1978. The reception that was accorded these carefully-crafted excursions into the literary supernatural by Britain's premier television channel encouraged the corporation's serious-minded and well-funded Film Department to embark on a season of horror film 'double-bills', in the manner so beloved of exploitation distributors in the fifties and sixties. To give the films concerned a varnish of merit, they were allocated to a slot on BBC2, then the minority home of studious and sober programming. The inaugural season launched on August 2, 1975, under the more conservative heading of 'Fantastic Double Bill', and opened with two films which no critic of the BBC (of which there were many) could reasonably decry as pandering to lowbrow taste: Robert Wiene's expressionist masterpiece *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919) and Hammer's *Quatermass 2* (1957), itself an adaptation of the corporation's own illustrious serial of 1955.

If the connection between these two was tenuous, not so the remaining films in the season as the Beeb's planners went out of their way to 'theme' the pairings so as to not to have them appear to be an arbitrary mix of populist elements: week two combined *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1963) with *The Premature Burial* (1962), Poe tales both, while week three had *This Island Earth* (1955) mated to *Barbarella* (1968) to illustrate a decade's difference in approach to the pulp genre of extravagant space opera. By August 30, a more light-hearted tone was in play with Bob Hope and Paulette Goddard lost in the Louisiana bayous and mid-twenties melodrama of *The Cat and the Canary* (1939) on the one hand, and Vincent Price, Peter Lorre, Boris Karloff and Joe E Brown hamming it up in Jacque Tourneur's *The Comedy of Terrors* (1963) on the other. But week five went back to horror basics with two gems from the archives: Robert Florey's *The Beast with F ive Fingers* (1946) and the ultra-rare William Cameron Menzies 3-D feature for Allied Artists, *The Maze* (1953). The theme in this instance was also literary adaptation, with the former drawn from a William Fryer Harvey short story and the latter based on a surrealist novel from 1945 by Frenchman Maurice Sandoz. In common with many 'lost' films, *The Maze* proved to be something of a disappointment in the event, its Jamesian setting and Tourneresque visuals undermined at the climax by the ludicrous revelation that the mysterious occupant of the locked room in Richard Carlson's Scottish castle is a giant *frog*, courtesy of the legend of Glamis and the discredited theory of phylogeny.

For over two hundred years, he suffered the torture of knowing he was a monster.. and feeling he was a man.
–Gerald MacTeam (Richard Carlson), *The Maze* (1953)

The Beast with Five Fingers was similarly plagued by an anticlimactic ending, but not before giving full vent to its Gothic catalogue of a demented pianist, a disembodied hand and a pathologically-disturbed Peter Lorre in his most memorable performance since Fritz Lang's *M* (1929). And with that, the season came to an end after a mere five weeks and ten films.

Audience response was good, however, and a second set of double-bills was scheduled for the summer of 1976, this time under the generic of 'Masters of Terror'. Beginning on August 14, as the country sweltered in the middle of a heatwave, the first four in sequence in this new set of ten were *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), Dr *Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1 932), *The Devil Doll* (1936) and *Frankenstein Created Woman* (1966), all but one of the directors of which could very well have been chosen to justify the collective heading: Rupert Julian, Rouben



Mamoulien, Tod Browning and Terence Fisher. But if so, such adherence to form was gone by the wayside by week three as 1932's *The Hounds of Zaroff* (shown under its American title of *The Most Dangerous Game*) was paired with the 1939 version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* – the 'Masters' in this instance being, presumably, the original authors of the works in question (Richard Connell and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle) rather than the directors of the film versions (Irving Pichel and Sidney Lanfield). By the time John Barrymore sprayed his insanity through gritted teeth in *The Mad Genius* (1932), Vincent Price gloated over the *Pit and the Pendulum* (1961), Boris Karloff ambled arthritically as *The Walking Dead* (1935) and Christopher Lee strode silently through series finale *Dracula-Prince of Darkness* (1965) on September 14, whatever was the original intention behind that titular umbrella was thoroughly up for grabs and looked to have been the *actors*, in the final analysis.

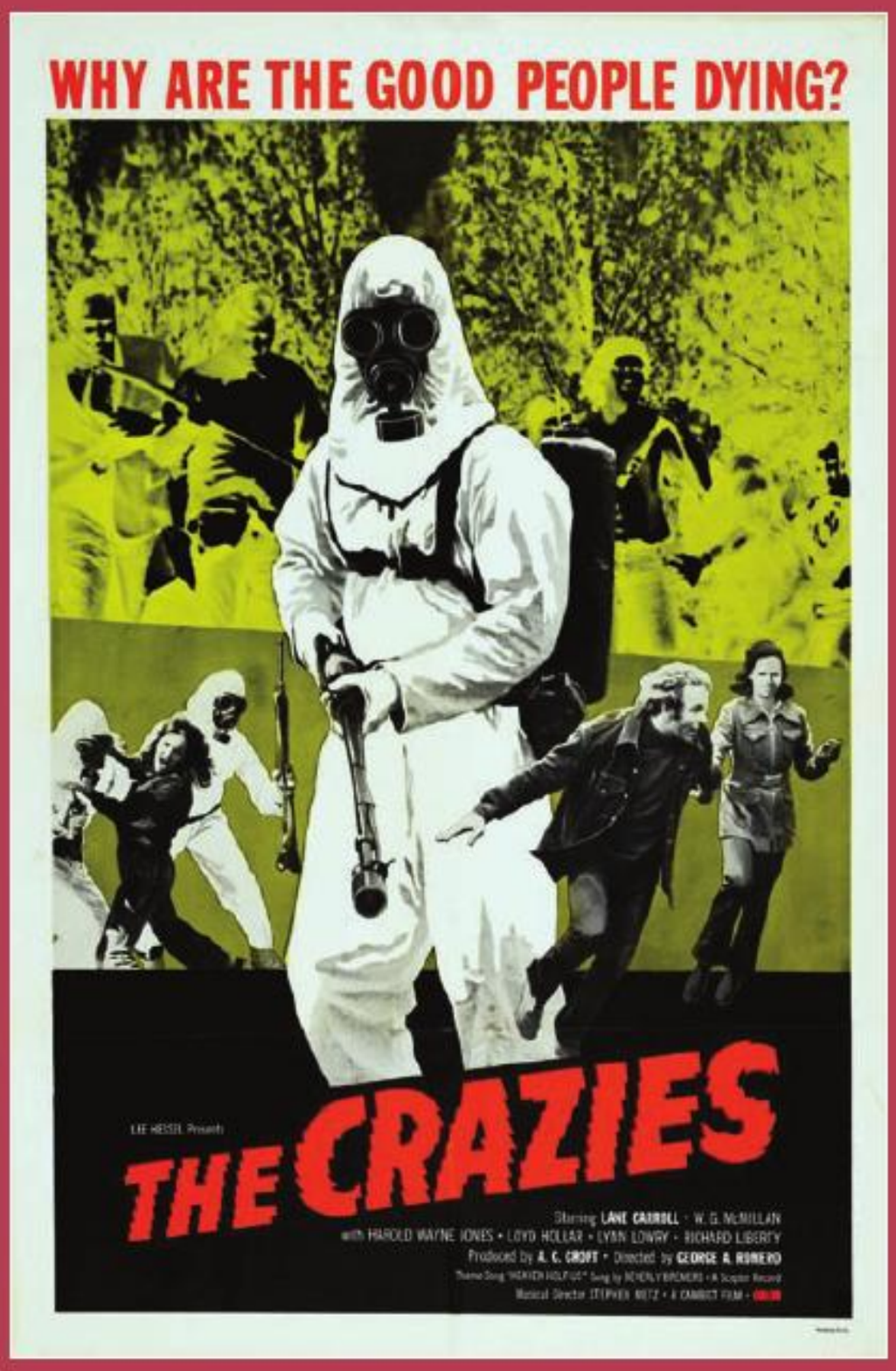
The 1977 season was truly spectacular, offering up a total of 22 films spread across the entire summer, though the attempt to come up with something more subtle than 'horror double bill' under which to collate them was again only partially successful. 'Dracula, Frankenstein and Friends' was the chosen designation on this occasion, and *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, his *Bride*, *Son* and *Ghost*, *The Brides of Dracula*, *The Mummy*, *The Wolf Man*, *Dracula's Daughter* and even *The Evil of Frankenstein* all fitted the bill to a tee. But less relevant in context were *The Kiss of the Vampire*, *The Plague of the Zombies*, *The Reptile*, two versions of *The Raven* and *The Black Cat*, this last from 1934. The *Houses* of Frankenstein and Dracula (as well as his *Son*) were also pertinent, though that of *Usher* was well wide of the mark. Nevertheless, the two most recent seasons had also thrown up a number of gems, in addition to presenting many of their charges for the first time on British television and in beautiful, pristine prints

for the most part.

Late-night horror had been a province of the commercial television companies for some time prior, and London Weekend Television (LWT) and its regional variants were already in the habit of filling the ungodly hours before closedown with X-certificate product, often hacked to fit a designated time-slot. Hammer's *The Kiss of the Vampire* had been shown in its American TV form as *Kiss of Evil*, and several of Roger Corman's Poe films were televised in the early seventies. Universal's 1931 *Dracula* and Warners' 1932 *Dr X* and 1933 *The Mystery of the Wax Museum* had also turned up unannounced. But ITV cared for ratings, not films, and what the BBC2 was doing was to give the horror film not only pride of place in its schedules but a legitimacy in terms of its right to be considered for mainstream programming at long last. In addition to this, the BBC's Film Department went out of its way to find the best available print of any film sanctioned for transmission, often combining elements from different sources to create the most complete version possible. The care and attention which the corporation lavished on cinematic minutiae was second to none, and this now applied to works by Val Lewton or Rowland V Lee every bit as much as it had

to those by Ingmar Bergman or Andrezej Wajda in the past; the Beeb's screening of *The Phantom of the Opera* in its 1976 season of double-bills had included the famous Technicolor sequence of the phantom dressed as the Red Death, while *The Kiss of the Vampire* featured in the 1977 season in its original uncut UK theatrical form. (Even the BBC was not always successful at tracking down rare prints, however; it only managed a 16mm print of Lewton's 1944 *The Body Snatcher* in 1981, minus a close-up of a drowned Bela Lugosi, and it would be another three years after that before it [accidentally] found a complete print of Mamoulian's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.) If ever there was a high point for the horror film on television, BBC2 provided it in the 1970s – even if the 1977 season was unhappily coincident with the bloody rampage of the Yorkshire Ripper, and the August 13 transmission of *The Black Cat* and *The Raven* (1935) came at the end of a day which was marked

Above: Lon Chaney dances to 'Moonlight Becomes You' in *The Wolfman. The Phantom of the Opera* before Andrew Lloyd Webber discovered him, and it's another foggy day in Scotland in *The Maze*


WHY ARE THE GOOD PEOPLE DYING?
LEE HESSEL Presents
THE CRAZIES
Starring LANE CARROLL • W. G. McMILLAN
with HAROLD WAYNE JONES • LLOYD HOLLAR • LYNN LOWRY • RICHARD LIBERTY
Produced by A. C. CROFT • Directed by GEORGE A. ROMERO

Right: George Romero's *The Crazies*, and Bela Lugosi as Murder Legendre in *White Zombie*

by pitched battles between the police and National Front supporters in Birmingham and the London Borough of Lewisham.

By 1978, the format was well and truly in its stride and a more blatant tag-line of 'Monster Double Bill' heralded a new season, inaugurated by Robert Florey's *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1932). At the time, this was another ultra-rare pre-Code nugget, in which Lugosi bled streetwalkers to death before dropping their corpses into the Seine and Charles Gemora cantered over the gambrel rooftops of Paris in a monkey suit, the hapless Sidney Fox clutched tightly in his simian grasp. Next up were men who could *Cheat Death* and had *X-Ray Eyes*, but the real B-movie pleasure was to be had from *The Fantastic Disappearing Man* (1958), the UK title for *The Return of Dracula* in the Latino form of thirties' lounge-lizard Francis Lederer. On July 22, *The Quatermass Experiment* (1955) whet the appetite for a network premiere of *The Crazies* (1973), George Romero's little-seen follow-up to *Night of the Living Dead*, after which it was back to Universal again with *Man-Made Monster* and *The Mummy's Curse* (both 1944). Universal also donated *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) to the cause, while Warners stumped up *House of Wax*, *Phantom of the Rue Morgue* and *Them!*, but without its colour title-card in the case of the latter. RKO's classic *King Kong* and bum-note Philippino *Superbeast* rounded out a total of sixteen more horror features in the style to which fans of the genre were fast becoming accustomed, though the highlights of this particular batch had to be the August 5 screening of Victor Halperin's *White Zombie* (1932) and that on August 19 of Boris Karloff-starrer *Voodoo Island* (1956), which for reasons known only to the schedulers were not actually paired despite their obvious affinity. The print of *White Zombie* looked as though it had been ground through Murder Legendre's sugar mill, but not even 46 years of wilful neglect could detract from the nightmare surrealism and sheer visual invention of this genuine Gothic fairy tale, its haunting use of plaintive negro spiritual 'Listen to the Lambs' as Madge Bellamy contemplates a fate worse than death in Bela Lugosi's Doré-inspired Haitian castle lifting the genre to a peak of dark poetic lyricism rarely achieved again.

You refused to shake hands once, I remember. Well, well.. We understand each other better now...
–Murder Legendre (Bela Lugosi), *White Zombie* (1932)

The so-called 'winter of discontent' in 1978/9 had brought about a change of government in the UK, and the country's first female Prime Minister in the form of

Robert Louis Stevenson's masterpiece of
TERROR
"The Strange DOOR"
Starring
Charles LAUGHTON · Boris KARLOFF
Sally FORREST · Richard STAPLEY
Robert Louis Stevenson's Story "The Sire de Maletroit's Door"
Screenplay by JERRY SACKHEIM · Directed by JOSEPH PEVNEY · Produced by TED RICHMOND · A Universal-International Picture

TWICE THE TERROR

Here's a complete listing of the BBC2 Horror Doubles.

Series 1: FANTASTIC DOUBLE BILL 1975

Saturday 2 August 1975: 22.55.00.05 *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) 00.05-01.20 *Quatermass II* (1957)

Saturday 9 August 1975: 22.45-00.00 *The Tell Tale Heart* (1963) 00.00-01.20 *The Premature Burial* (1961)

Saturday 23 August 1975: 22.40-00.05 *This Island Earth* (1955) 00.05-01.25 *Barbarella* (1968)

Saturday 30 August 1975: 22.55-00.05 *The Cat and The Canary* (1939) 00.05-01.25 *The Comedy of Terrors* (1963)

Saturday 6 September 1975: 22.35-00.00 *The Beast With Five Fingers* (1947) 00.00-01.20 *The Maze* (1954)

Season 2: MASTERS OF TERROR 1976

Saturday 14 August 1976: 22.55-00.10 The Phantom of the Opera (1925)
00.10-01.40 Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1932)

Saturday 21 August 1976: 22.00-23.20 Devil Doll (1932)
23.20-00.50 Frankenstein Created Woman (1967)

Saturday 28 August 1976: 22.00-00.00 *The Hounds of Zaroff* (1932) 00.00-01.25 *Hound of the Baskervilles* (1939)

Saturday 5 September 1976: 22.55-00.10 *The Mad Genius* (1931)
00.10-01.30 *The Pit and The Pendulum* (1961)

Saturday 14 August 1976:
22.50.23.55 *The Walking Dead* (1936)
23.55.01.20 *Dracula Prince of Darkness* (1966)

Margaret Hilda Thatcher had taken office a mere two months before BBC2 launched a fifth season of double-bills which, for want of anything better, was reverted to its original title of 'Masters of Terror'. The cooler political temperature was matched by a summer often devoid of sun, though a 3p tax-cut lightened the mood, as did July 14's transmission of *Dr X* and Hammer's *The Curse of Frankenstein* – even if neither were particularly up to par: the Beeb had failed to turn up the elusive two-tone Technicolor print of the former, and the latter was screened in its garish Warner TV version (ITV later produced a much crisper Eastmancolor print from its own archives). As a more pauperish season got underway to match the prevailing mood of pruning which the grocer's daughter from Grantham who now resided in Downing Street was intent on exercising on the British economy, these were followed by the minor offerings of *Sherlock Holmes and the Spider Woman*, *Black Friday* and *The Mummy's Hand*, leavened by a sextet of films from Hammer. The pearls in the oyster this time around were *Night Monster* (1942) and *The Strange Door* (1951), both of them curios from the Universal vaults. The first was one of the studio's typical forties ensemble pieces, a study in economy and efficiency (it was shot in two weeks by veteran Ford Beebe) and an object lesson for Hammer a decade later. Lugosi and Lionel Atwill were the headliners, but the actual 'night monster' of the title – a quadriplegic with psychokinetic limbs – turned out to be Ralph Morgan, the kindly Wizard of Oz himself. *The Strange Door*, on the other hand, wore a more literary pedigeree in short story 'The Sire de Maletroit's Door' by Robert Louis Stevenson and crossed the fifties' fad for derring-do with the devilish goings-on of the company's wartime B-features. Karloff was top-billed for this one, but the days when he and Lugosi performed star turns were long over and the film really belonged to Charles Laughton, who chewed the Gothic ambience with aplomb and showed that he had lost none of the tics and psychotic neuroses that he had deployed so well in everything from *The Island of Lost Souls* to *Captain Kidd*.

Series 3: DRACULA, FRANKENSTEIN AND FRIENDS 1977

Saturday 2 July 1977: 23.05-00.25 *Dracula* (1931) 00.25-01.35 *Frankenstein* (1931)

Saturday 9 July 1977: 22.50-00.00 *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) 00.00-01.25 *Brides of Dracula* (1960)

Saturday 16 July 1977: 22.45-00.15 *The Mummy* (1932) 00.15-01.05 *The Wolfman* (1940)

Saturday 23 July 1977: 22.10-23.45 *Son of Frankenstein* (1939) 23.45-01.10 *Kiss of the Vampire* (1964)

Saturday 30 July 1977: 22.35.00.05 *Dracula's Daughter* (1936) 00.05-01.30 *Plague of the Zombies* (1966)

Saturday 6 August 1977: 22.50-23.55 *The Ghost of Frankenstein* (1942) 22.55-01.10 *The Premature Burial* (1961)

Saturday 13 August 1977: 23.05-00.05 *The Raven* (1935) 00.05.01.10 *The Black Cat* (1933)

Saturday 20 August 1977: 22.00-23.15 *Frankenstein Meets The Wolfman* (1943) 00.05-01.35 *The Raven* (1963)

Saturday 27 August 1977: 22.20-23.10 *House of Frankenstein* (1944) 00.05-01.35 *The Reptile* (1966)

Saturday 3 September 1977: 21.55-23-10 *Son of Dracula* (1943) 23.45-01.10 *Evil of Frankenstein* (1964)

Saturday 10 September 1977: 22.05-23.15 *House of Dracula* (1945) 23.20-00.35 *Fall of the House of Usher* (1960)

Series 4: MONSTER DOUBLE BILL 1978

Saturday 8 July 1978: 22.55-23.55 *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1933) 23.55.01.25 *The Man Who Could Cheat Death* (1959)

Saturday 15 July 1978: 22.40-23.55 *The Fantastic Disappearing Man* (1958) 00.00-01.15 *X-The Man With X-Ray Eyes* (1963)

Saturday 22 July 1978: 22.00-23.20 *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955) 23.50-01.35 *The Crazies* (1973)

Saturday 29 July 1978: 23.15-00.15 *Man Made Monster* (1940) 00.15-01.15 *The Mummy's Curse* (1945)

Saturday 5 August 1978: 22.40-23.55 *White Zombie* (1932) 00.00-01.25 *House of Wax* (1953)

Saturday 12 August 1978: 21.40-23.10 *Them* (1954) 23.45-01.05 *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957)

Saturday 19 August 1978: 22.00-23.15 *Voodoo Island* (1957) 23.20-00.45 *Phantom of the Rue Morgue* (1953)

Saturday 26 August 1978: 22.00.23.35 *King Kong* (1933) 23.40-01.10 *Superbeast* (1972)

This place has been the breeding spot of hatred – insane hatred. Revenge.. Murder.. It's got to be blotted out and everyone in it!
–Margaret Ingston (Fay Helm), *Night Monster* (1942)

The Strange Door was transmitted on August 11, along with Hammer's Bram Stoker adaptation *Blood from the Mummy's Tomb*, and both this pairing and the one which followed it enjoyed a larger than usual audience due to a technicians' strike at ITV which closed down the entire network till August 25. The 1979 season signed off with *It Came from Outer Space* (1953) and *Quatermass and the Pit* (1967). A week later, on September 2, the battered body of the *twelfth* victim of the Yorkshire Ripper was discovered in Bradford city centre, and real-life horror returned to haunt the nation's consciousness.

'Viewers who might prefer *The Bat* to the sickening thud of willow against leather, or *The Skull* to the gory sight of televised miracles of modern medicine, will be burning the midnight oil on the next eight [it was actually *ten*, as it turned out] Saturdays,' advised the *Radio Times* as BBC2's sixth season of double-bills got underway in 1980. By now, the channel had given up on its attempts to find a more upmarket label for the series, and 'Horror Double Bill' it was to become for the remainder of its commissioning. As well as being treated to a cover on the country's best-selling TV guide, five pages of the magazine were given over to Geoff Brown to summarise the latest compendia. 'One way or another there are going to be plenty of bumps in the night coming up..' he promised in formulaic fashion, which suited a season that seemed to be much more of a grab-bag of available product than those which had preceded it.

Night of the Demon was teamed with *The Ghoul* (1973), the second of three horrors from the short-lived Tyburn Films, which briefly tried to capture Hammer's thunder in the 1970s (the third of them was slotted in on August 23: *Legend of the Werewolf*). These were joined by four from Hammer rival Amicus (*Dr Terror's House of Horrors*; *The Beast Must Die*; *From Beyond the Grave*; *The Skull*), three from Hammer itself (*The Curse of the Werewolf*; *Paranoiac*; *Captain Kronos-Vampire Hunter*) and two repeats (*The Devil Doll*; *The Beast with Five Fingers*). The Beeb's Film Department had not completely withdrawn from trawling through the archives, however. The July 12 combo also offered up *The Mad Ghoul*, a minor Universal opus from 1943 which was a welcome opportunity to see several of the studio's 'second eleven' in action, George Zucco and Turhan Bey among them. (Zucco had appeared briefly in *House of Frankenstein* in the 1976 season.) A more substantial Universal rarity was plucked from the vaults on August 9, when Basil Rathbone, Boris Karloff and a young Vincent Price strutted their well-honed stuff among the corridors and cobwebs of the *Tower of London* (1939). A Rathbone rather than a Karloff picture, with the fey Price disposed of in a vat of Malmsey early in the proceedings, Roland V Lee's cod-historical saga nevertheless provided an intriguing glimpse into the studio's attempts to find new homes for its horrors at the end of the thirties and to compete with the box-office success of the swashbucklers of Errol Flynn. (Rathbone had duelled memorably with Flynn in both *Captain Blood* [1935] and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* [1938], and Price also joined Flynn for *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* the same year as he appeared in *Tower of London*.) The following week's *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), though interesting as an early example of Ray Harryhausen's sure touch with stop-motion, seemed somehow out of place amid the welter of Gothic horrors, while *The Bat* (1959, and with Price in only a subordinate role) was barely even a horror at all, based as it was on a creaky melodrama from 1926 by celebrated mystery writer Mary Roberts Rinehart.

Of the oddities on display, theatrical second-feature *Night of the Lepus* (1972) pitched Stuart Whitman, Janet Leigh, a careworn Rory Calhoun and *Star Trek*'s DeForest Kelley against giant rabbits – the latin *lupus* having presumably been considered more enticing to horror fans than 'Night of the Bunny'. This mammalian

There was no limit to the Horror...
NO END TO THE
NIGHT OF THE LEPUS
MGM PRESENTS "NIGHT OF THE LEPUS" STARRING STUART WHITMAN · JANET LEIGH · RORY CALHOUN
SCREENPLAY BY DON HOLLIDAY AND GENE R. KEARNEY · BASED UPON THE NOVEL "THE YEAR OF THE ANGRY RABBIT"
BY RUSSELL BRADDON · PRODUCED BY A. C. LYLES · DIRECTED BY WILLIAM F. CLAXTON · METROCOLOR

monstrousness was the low point of the entire series, the kind of inspiration-free nonsense which was more typical of the dog-end of an ITV day than a prestigious BBC2 showcase, and no amount of stunt-men in hare suits or real bunnies plonked onto miniature sets could elicit anything in the viewer but incredulity. That it was badged as M-G-M made it all the more risible. *Daughters of Satan* (also 1972) was another low-budget softcore Philippino horror like the 1978 season's *Superbeast* (with which it was originally released), starring Tom Selleck in the days before *Magnum PI* as a writer embroiled in reincarnation and witchcraft. *Chamber of Horrors* from 1966 was only a marginal improvement – a poor man's *House of Wax* , produced as a pilot for an uncommissioned TV series but released theatrically with the twin gimmicks of 'horror horn' and 'fear flasher' as a sop to the squeamish. Those who chose to ignore the warnings were left wondering what they must have missed, as nothing of gruesome note followed these interruptions to a quaint piece of American Gothic in which Cesare Danova's Baltimore wax museum served as backdrop for him to sleuth after Patrick O'Neal, a deranged, hook-handed serial killer intent on creating a composite corpse from the body parts of his victims. The synopsis was better than anything which actually occurred in a highly-coloured but largely anaemic mid-sixties potboiler from Warners, which sadly lacked the silken menace of Vincent Price and was made at a time when the heart was fast going out of the whole horror genre.

Ladies and gentlemen, the motion picture you are about to see contains scenes so terrifying the public must be given grave warning. Therefore, the management has instituted visual and audible warning at the beginning of each of the Four Supreme Fright Points. The Fear Flasher is the visual warning. The Horror Horn is the audible warning. Turn away when you see the FEAR FLASHER! Close your eyes when you hear the HORROR HORN!

–Opening narration (Robert Conrad), *Chamber of Horrors* (1966)

The 1980 season ended with Amicus horror *The Skull* in solus position on

Series 5: MASTERS OF TERROR 1979

Saturday 14 July 1979: 22.35-23.50 *Doctor X* (1932) 23.55-01.20 *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1956)

Saturday 21 July 1979: 22.30-23.30 *Sherlock Holmes and the Spider Woman* (1944) 00.00-01.30 *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1959)

Saturday 28 July 1979: 22.15-23.25 *Night Monster* (1942) 23.30.01.10 *The Devil Rides Out* (1968)

Saturday 4 August 1979: 23.00.00.05 Black Friday (1940) 00.05.01.35 *The Mummy* (1959)

Saturday 11 August 1979: 22.05.23.25 *The Strange Door* (1951) 23.25-01.00 *Blood From The Mummy's Tomb* (1971)

Saturday 18 August 1979: 22.35-23.40 *The Mummy's Hand* (1944) 00.10-01.35 *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* (1973)

Saturday 25 August 1979: 22.00-23.20 *It Came From Outer Space* (1953) 23.25-01.05 *Quatermass and the Pit* (1967)

RadioTimes
You will come to scoff
and stay to shudder!
Night of the Demon
AND
THE
GHOUL
Shock!
Horror!
A reign of terror begins in the dead of night as these two spine-chillers top the Horror Double Bill Saturday BBC2.
Back feature: masters of the macabre

Series 6: HORROR DOUBLE BILL 1980

Saturday 28 June 1980: 22.30-00.00 *Night of the Demon* (1957) 00.02-01.35 *The Ghoul* (1975)

Saturday 5 July 1980: 10.10-11.35 *The Beast With Five Fingers* (1947) 23.50-01.30 *Chamber of Horrors* (1966)

Saturday 12 July 1980: 22.40-23.45 *The Mad Ghoul* (1943) 23.50-01.30 *Dr. Terror's House of Horrors* (1964)

Saturday 19 July 1980: 22.35-23.50 *The Devil Doll* (1936) 23.55-01.25 *Daughters of Satan* (1972)

Saturday 26 July 1980: 22.10-23.40 *Curse of the Werewolf* (1961) 23.55-01.35 *From Beyond The Grave* (1974)

Saturday 2 August 1980: 22.35-23.50 *Paranoiac* (1963) 12.00-01.35 *Captain Kronos Vampire Hunter* (1973)

Saturday 9 August 1980: 22.35-23.55 *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* 00.00-01.20 *Night of the Lepus* (1972)

TWICE THE TERROR

Saturday 16 August 1980: 22.20-23.40 *The Bat* (1959) 23.45-01.20 *Legend of the Werewolf* (1974)

Saturday 23 August 1980: 22.40.00.00 *Tower of London* (1939) 00.00-01.20 *The Skull* (1965)

Saturday 30 August 1980: 00.00-01.35 *The Beast Must Die* (1974)

Series 7: HORROR DOUBLE BILL 1981

Saturday 4 July 1981: 22.35-23.10 *I Walked With A Zombie* (1943) 00.10.01.10 *Zoltan Hound of Dracula* (1976)

Saturday 11 July 1981: 23.05-00.15 *Cat People* (1945) 00.15-01.35 *Mystery of the Wax Museum* (1933)

Saturday 18 July 1981: 22.55-00.05 *The Seventh Victim* (1943) 00.05-01.35 *Race With The Devil* (1970)

Saturday 25 July 1981: 21.20-22.30 *Isle of the Dead* (1940) 23.40-01.25 *The Crazies* (1973)

Saturday 1 August 1981: 22.30-23.45 *Bedlam* (1946) 23.45-01.30 *Bug* (1975)

Saturday 8 August 1981: 22.50-23.55 *The Leopard Man* (1943) 23.55-01.35 *The Shuttered Room* (1966)

Saturday 15 August 1981: 22.35-23.40 *The Curse of the Cat People* (1943) 23.40-01.10 *The Eye of the Cat* (1969)

Saturday 22 August 1981: 22.30-23.40 *The Body Snatcher* (1945) 23.40-01.25 *Theatre of Blood* (1973)

Series 8 (no transmission times available)

Saturday 9 July 1983: *Dracula* (1931) and *Frankenstein* (1931)

Saturday 16 July 1983: *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935)

Saturday 23 July 1983: *Dracula's Daughter* (1936) and *Son Of Frankenstein* (1939)

Saturday 30 July 1983: *The Mummy* (1932) and *Ghost of Frankenstein* (1942)

Saturday 6 August 1983: *The Wolfman* (1941) and *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* (1943)

Saturday 13 August 1983: *Son Of Dracula* (1943) and *House Of Frankenstein* (1944)

Saturday 20 August 1983: *The Mummy's Hand* (1940) and *House Of Dracula* (1945)

Saturday 3 September 1983: *The Black Cat* (1934), *The Raven* (1935), and *Murders In The Rue Morgue* (1932)

HIS AND HER HORROR!
Now! Revealed on the screen! A secret cult of lust-craved witches torturing their victims with fire and desire!
See a half-man, half-monster ripping helpless victims to shreds in his mad hunger for human flesh!
"DAUGHTERS OF SATAN"
AND
"SUPERBEAST"
"DAUGHTERS OF SATAN" Produced by AUBREY SCHENCK Directed by HOLLINGSWORTH MORSE - Screenplay by JOHN C. HIGGINS
United Artists
"SUPERBEAST" Produced by GEORGE SCHENCK Directed by GEORGE SCHENCK - Screenplay by GEORGE SCHENCK

THE YEAR'S MOST STARTLING ENTERTAINMENT INNOVATION!
A film with many scenes so terrifying, a built-in audio-visual warning system has been devised.
THE FEAR FLASHER:
At the start of certain scenes that many may consider too shocking, a red light will begin its signal on the screen to alert you to the terror ahead.
THE HORROR HORN:
At the same time the Fear Flasher starts blinking its warning, the Horror Horn will sound the alarm. Precisely at this instant, shut your eyes and hold your ears.
CHAMBER OF HORRORS
The unspeakable vengeance of the crazed "Baltimore Strangler."
STARRING CESARE DANOVA · WILFRID HYDE-WHITE · LAURA DEVON · PATRICE WYMORE · SUZY PARKER
ALSO STARRING TUN TUN PHILIP BOURNEUF AND PATRICK O'NEAL AS "JASON"
Story by Ray Russell and Stephen Kandel • Produced and Directed by Hy Averback
Screenplay by Stephen Kandel
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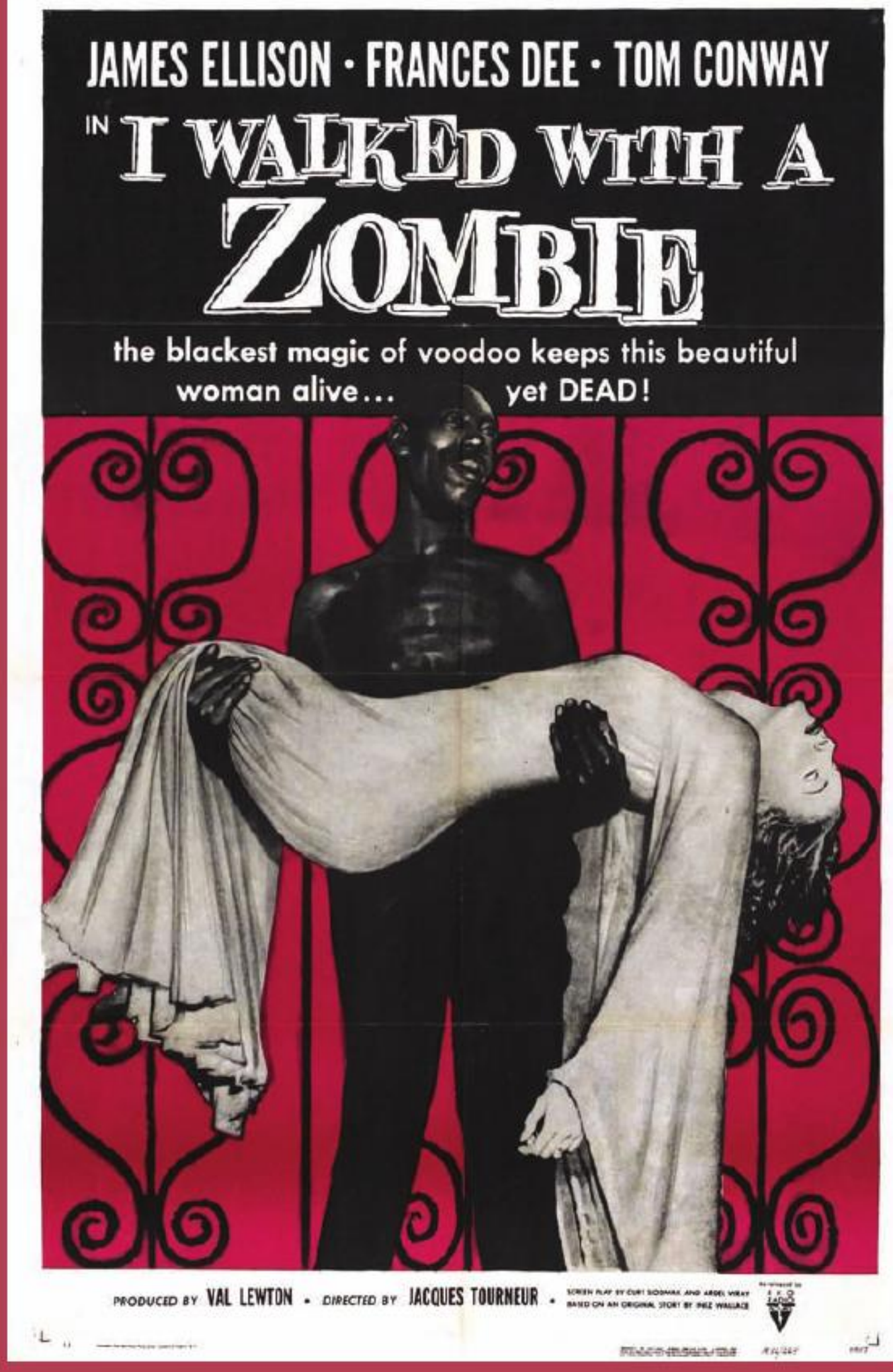

JAMES ELLISON · FRANCES DEE · TOM CONWAY
IN I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE
the blackest magic of voodoo keeps this beautiful woman alive... yet DEAD!
PRODUCED BY VAL LEWTON · DIRECTED BY JACQUES TOURNEUR

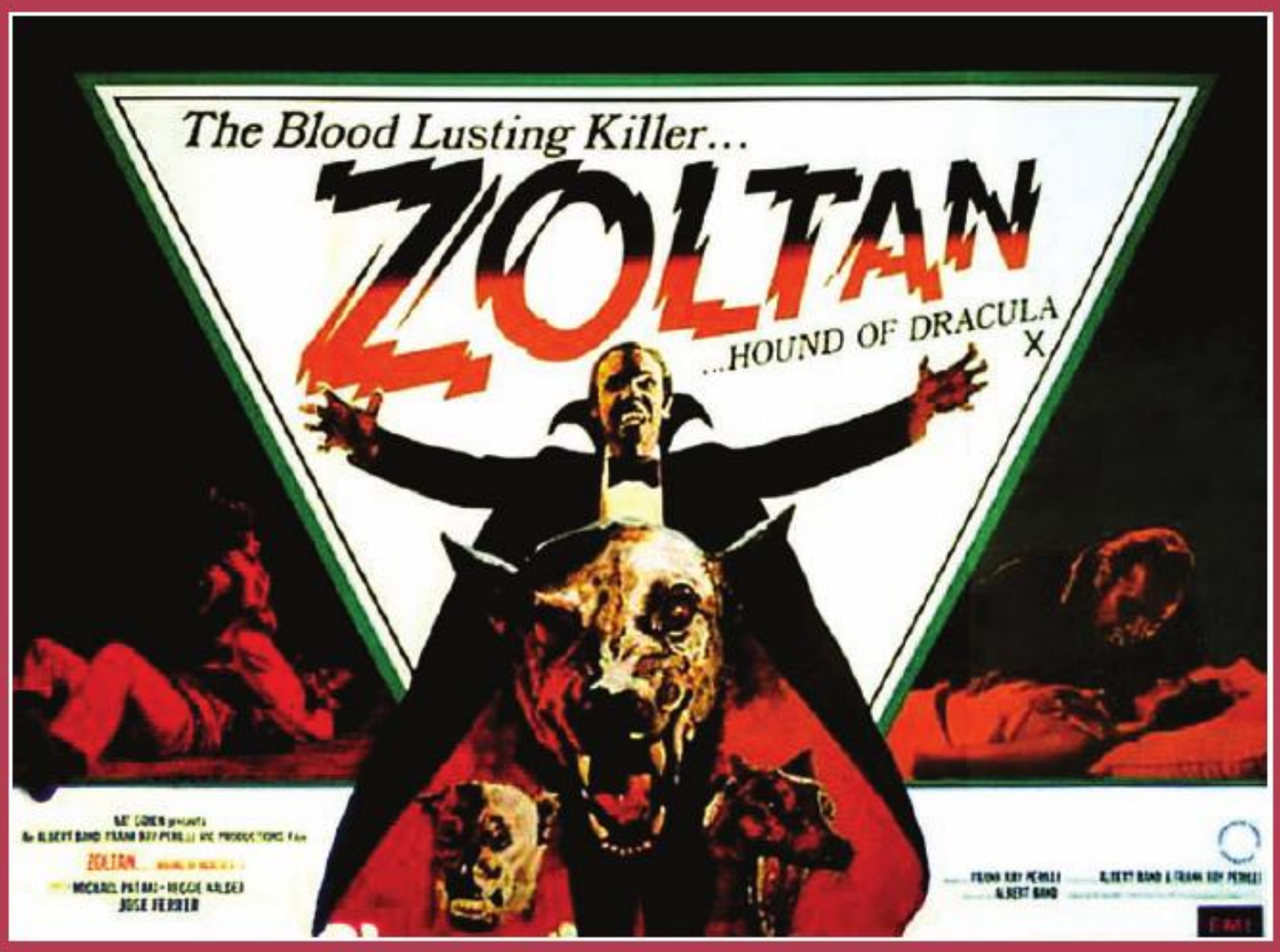
GOD HELP YOU WHEN THE DEVIL WANTS YOU!
PETER FONDA
WARREN OATES
RACE WITH THE DEVIL
THEY WITNESSED AN UNSPEAKABLE ACT!
LORETTA SWIT · LARA PARKER

August 30, which had Peter Cushing persecuted by the perambulating skull of the Marquis de Sade while the country itself was plagued by the twin spectres of recession and rising unemployment, and it started to seem as though the best that the BBC had to offer had already been screened. It was certainly the case that the corporation would have more trouble acquiring titles for transmission in the years to come; it took Hollywood no time at all to realise the extra revenue potential in releasing old movies on videocassette, either as rentals or (hugely expensive) 'sell-throughs'. Soon, film companies began to buy back prodigal rights in their back catalogues, or simply refuse to sell to television in the first place for fear of undermining their own retail markets. By the second half of the eighties, multi-channel satellite TV was a reality, and the carrot for both Sky and the later BSB was films and sport; accordingly, they also ruthlessly acquired film libraries for the exclusive use of their own patrons. The days when either the BBC or ITV could trot along to the BFI's archives and select whatever they wanted to screen would come to a close by the end of the decade. For now, though, BBC2 was intent to carry on as before, and a seventh season of Horror Double Bills commenced on July 4, 1981.

By then, the country was in need of distraction. Unemployment was approaching 3 million, race riots were commonplace and IRA hunger strikers were falling like flies in Lisburn's Maze Prison, inspiring a wave of terrorist bombings on the British mainland. But things were not all bad: there was the Royal wedding of Charles, Prince of Wales, to Lady Diana Spencer on July 29 to look forward to (which was to attract some 30 million television viewers on the day), and the infamous Yorkshire Ripper no longer represented a threat to the women of Northern England, HGV driver Peter William Sutcliffe having been arrested on January 2 after claiming his thirteenth victim in November 1980.

The new season of double-bills commenced in promising style with Jacques Tourneur's elegant *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), one of the true classics of the genre. Others in RKO producer Val Lewton's low-budget repertoire followed swiftly: *Cat People* and *Curse of the Cat People*, *The Leopard Man*, *The Seventh Victim*, *The Body Snatcher*, *Isle of the Dead* and *Bedlam*, all made between 1942 and 1946 and all representative of the very pinnacle of fantasy cinema. The majority of them had been screened before, adding weight to the suspicion that the Beeb's sources were drying up, but that in no way detracted from the delight of savouring them as a package. Not that the non-Lewtons were uninteresting: *The Seventh Victim* was broadcast along with *Race with the Devil* (1975), a surprisingly effective *Exorcist*-inspired action thriller with Peter Fonda and cult-favourite Warren Oates as the macho half of a quartet of vacationers whose impressive Winnebago comes under sustained attack after they inadvertently witness a satanic ritual. The occult element was really an excuse for some terrific road-chase sequences along the lines of Steven Spielberg's *Duel*, and what should have been a predictable programme-filler was raised well above the average by an appealing cast and tense direction from Jack Starrett. *The Crazies* was another repeat, but *The Shuttered Room* (1967) and *Eye of the Cat* (1969) both had something to recommend them – the first was an HP Lovecraft adaptation with a young Oliver Reed (but without any element of Lovecraft beyond the setting) and the second was written by Joseph Stefano, of Hitchcock's *Psycho* fame. Michael Sarrazin and Gayle Hunnicutt fell victim to a horde of hungry cats in the latter, but domestic moggies were not a great deal more terrifying than the bunny-rabbits of the previous year's *Night of the Lupus*, the incendiary cockroaches of *Bug*, or the vampiric Doberman of *Zoltan-Hound of Dracula* (1978) – both of which featured in the latest line-up – despite the presence of the sinister Reggie Nalder in the latter, so it was left to Vincent Price to wrap up the season with lip-smacking relish and a pile of inventive corpses as Edward Lionheart, nutty proprietor of the *Theatre of Blood* (1973).

The following July's late-night listings were noticeably lacking in horror content, and the London TV audience of 1982 only had the bombs of the provisional IRA to fill them with terror and disgust, as no room was found in the BBC's schedules for yet another season of Horror Double Bills. After seven years and more than a hundred fright-filled movies, television's greatest



tribute to the golden age of screen horror appeared to have run its course. But not quite...

The series returned for one last hurrah in 1983, although it was more of a wallow in nostalgia of its own making than a genuine entry in the canon. The *Radio Times* again joined in the ballyhoo, advising its readers that 'The monsters of Universal's classic spine-chillers of the 30s and 40s will be making their macabre way across our screens throughout the summer..' and interviewing Elsa Lanchester, the Bride of Frankenstein herself, for good measure. 'Fasten your torture chains,' Clive Hirschhorn urged laboriously, 'It's going to be a jumpy night...' The problem was, it already *had* been in the company of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, his heirs and associates, *The Mummy*, *The Wolf Man* and the rest, and even a *triple* bill of *The Raven*, *The Black Cat* and *Murders in the Rue Morgue* at the close could do little to stifle a growing sense of *ennui*. The age of original programming was over; the age of repeats was coming to pass. And that was that. If video killed the radio star (according to The Buggles's hit of 1979), then videotape movies were killing the ability of the Beeb – or any other terrestrial TV channel – to cherry-pick old films for specialist seasons of programming. Sky, BSB, Ted Turner and the rest of Hollywood were all zealously carpet-bagging the product that until recently only the BBC had seemed to care about, to repackage and retail it anew. Broadcast television was moving into a new era where only a relative handful of films would ever again be available to it, and those would now be required to be recycled ad infinitum, ad nauseam.

In 1987, Channel 4 picked up the cudgel with a Friday-night horror double-bill of its own, complete with the novelty of the original theatrical trailers to promote the following week's fare. But the films were mostly familiar, and the prints often dire. In the same year, the BBC produced *The Studio That Dripped Blood*, a careful and affectionate documentary on Hammer Films, which was followed by a season of the company's Gothic horrors. In 1993, a new series of late-night double-bills was televised under the title of 'Dr Terror's Vault of Horror', introduced by actor Guy Henry as a waspish, demonic version of *Rocky Horror*'s Richard O'Brien. Henry's monologues were furnished by Kim Newman and were designed to send up the films which followed them; in less than a decade, the BBC had gone from reverential nostalgia to acid camp in respect of the audience for late-night horror. Moreover, it had started to show the films in 'edited' versions, whereas previously it had gone out of its way to respect the integrity of the originals. To be sure, horror had become bloodier and more extreme in the meantime, but the whole ethos of the corporation was changing – and not for the better. In 1993, 'Dr Terror' even introduced a first British television screening of the restored, fully uncut version of Hammer's *The Curse of the Werewolf* – only for viewers who eagerly awaited the trumpeted presentation of four minutes of legendary 'lost' footage to be left open-mouthed when the same truncated American version of the film which was always transmitted was once more reeled off for their delectation by mistake. (The error was corrected some months later, when the complete version was finally shown – though to a good deal less fanfare than before.) A later screening of *The Two Faces of Dr Jekyll* was similarly culled from a number of sources and also managed to restore missing footage in the process (though by no means fully), which seemed to show that there were elements in the Beeb who were still passionate about feature films. But it was not to last. The redoubtable Mark Deitch, formerly Head of Acquired Programming, left the corporation for pastures commercial and any care and concern which still remained for the transmission of films on the BBC effectively left with him.

When the corporation's revolving-door Directors General think to waffle on about what a shining beacon of broadcasting excellence the BBC is, they blithely forget that any concern it once had for Britain's cinematic heritage has long since passed into the bosom of Channel Four and its FilmFour division. Anyone unlucky enough to catch a late-night transmission of a film from the forties or fifties on BBC-TV these days will likely experience it as a VHS copy or digital download, complete with hideous artifacting. Like so much else about this imperious, self-satisfied institution, the days when anybody actually gave a stuff are long gone, replaced by egocentric presenters and bloated salaries for all and sundry. The modern BBC is one-part sport-fixation, one-part government propaganda arm and large-part magazine puff and celebrity gossip; even its 'flagship' Six O'Clock News is rarely of little more substance than the copy in the *Daily Star*. So don't expect a revival of the corporation's Saturday late-night Horror Double Bills any time soon, despite the efforts of pressure groups like Richard Gladman's Classic Horror Campaign (www.classichorrorcampaign.com) and its various events and retrospectives, unless Mark Gatiss or Steven Moffat should decide to suggest to the powers-that-Beeb that such a move might somehow be relevant to the inter-dimensional journeyings of global cash-cow *Doctor Who*.

Then somebody would no doubt sit up and listen.

Above: Horror host Dr. Terror portrayed by Guy Henry. But we still prefer Peter Cushing and his tarot cards

DERANGED

...THE CONFESSIONS OF A NECROPHILE

DERANGED
...THE CONFESSIONS OF A NECROPHILE
PRETTY SALLY MAE DIED A VERY UNNATURAL DEATH!
...but the worst hasn't happened to her yet!
DERANGED

Remastered and finally available uncut including the infamous brain scooping scene! Loaded with newly produced extras featuring Tom Savini, Scott Spiegel, Laurence R. Harvey, Jeff Gillen and much more!

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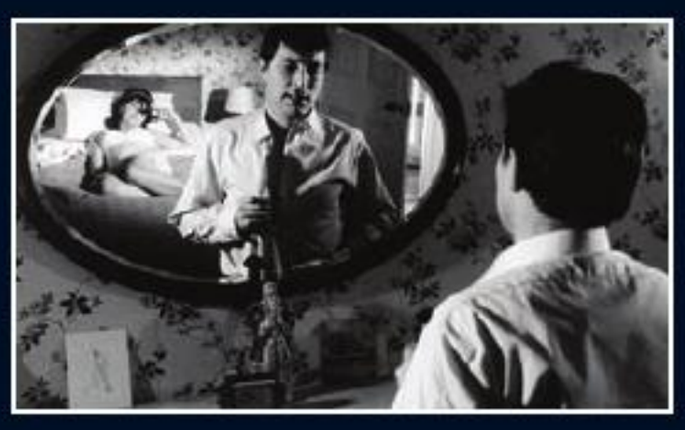
John Hamilton

The Terrors of Tigon

PART 1

John Hamilton on how a lion with stripes became one of the biggest British horror studios of the 60s and 70s...



Above, from top to bottom: Early Tigon sleazies: *That Kind of Girl*, *Saturday Night Out* and *The Pleasure Girls*.
Opposite: *Witchfinder General* was retitled by AIP and released in the USA as part of their Poe series

To the great British public, the term 'Hammer Horror' is so synonymous with British horror movies from the 1960s and 1970s that most people are unaware that there was anyone else active in the genre. Horror buffs of course know better but let me start this article on the films made by one of Hammer's more robust competitors by telling you something you probably don't know; Tigon was a bigger company than Hammer. In fact Tigon was a MUCH bigger company than Hammer. In the 1970's, when the British film industry was still bathing in the afterglow of the 'swinging sixties', Tigon, under the watchful eye of its founder Tony Tenser, had grown from a single office at the unfashionable end of Soho to occupying two whole floors of Hammer House (James Carreras and the Hammer empire were squeezed into a single floor, but as landlords they had the privilege of being closer to the gents' loos!)

By then, Tigon was a quoted company with an estimated capital value of £15m- a huge sum at the time; they had a distribution arm that released 10-15 films a year, owned the third largest cinema chain in the UK and had businesses that ran from music publishing to property management.

And of course they made movies; between 1967 and 1972 Tigon made 23 feature films, an even dozen of which were fantasy, which neatly brings me back to the point of this article. Tigon never claimed to have redefined the genre but they did make one acknowledged classic, several exceptionally good chillers and a number of others that were never less than entertaining—all of which more than justify a reappraisal of the term 'Tigon Terror'.

EAST END OPPORTUNISTS

Tigon came out of the ashes of the Compton Group, a rather grand name that disguised the activities of two East End opportunists named Michael Klinger and Tony Tenser. Films with titles like *That Kind of Girl* (1963), *Saturday Night Out* (1964) and *The Pleasure Girls* (1965) traded on sex, or at least the promise of it, since the activity was something that was only practiced by foreigners, at least as far as the British censor was concerned.

By sailing about as close to the wind as was possible, Klinger and Tenser made a small fortune but their reputation was about on a par with the newsagents who sold smutty pictures from under the counter (see *Peeping Tom*) and both Klinger and Tenser craved better things.

Klinger retained the Compton Group as his own vehicle for film production while Tenser established Tony Tenser Films Ltd, and with £10,000 in his bank account he went bargain hunting. Tenser was shrewd enough not to over-commit, and while Compton were promising 12-16 features a year, Tony Tenser Films bought the rights to older films such as *Jack the Giant Killer* (1962) and *Twice Told Tales* (1962) and re-packaged them as 'new' double bills which made just enough money to keep the company name alive while he pulled together his first production deal. That cautious first step was to be *Mini Weekend* (1967), which aimed to be a low-rent version of *Billy Liar* (1963) but actually amounted to not much more than some loosely connected fetish fantasies.

Despite being ripped apart by the critics *Mini Weekend* found an appreciative audience in the more 'select' cinemas, and in common with most of Tenser's films it more than covered its costs with a sale to the US, where it played in grindhouses under the title of *The Tomcat*. The profits were such that Tenser may well have dallied in sexploitation territory for longer had his interest not been piqued by an American producer called Patrick Curtis, who brought with him a young English director named Michael Reeves. Curtis was one half of a company called Curtwel. The other half was his fiancée Raquel Welch. They had previously tried to interest Compton in a number of projects written by Reeves, including *Blood Moon* and *The Devil's Discord*, the latter intended as a vehicle for Peter Cushing.

LEAVE THE CHILDREN HOME!
...and if YOU are SQUEAMISH
STAY HOME WITH THEM!!!!!!!

A crawling shape intrude!
A blood-red thing that writhes
from out The scenic solitude!
It writhes!–it writhes!–
with mortal pangs
The mimes become its food,
And seraphs sob at vermin fangs
In human gore imbued.

EDGAR ALLAN POE

EDGAR ALLAN POE'S

THE CONQUEROR WORM

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE AUDIENCES

M

(PARENTAL DISCRETION ADVISED)

IN COLOR by PERFECT
FROM AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL

STARRING
VINCENT PRICE · IAN OGILVY · RUPERT DAVIES · AND INTRODUCING HILARY DWYER

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER TONY TENSER · PRODUCED BY LOUIS M. HEYWARD · DIRECTED BY MICHAEL REEVES · SCREENPLAY BY MICHAEL REEVES & TOM BAKER

BASED ON A BOOK ENTITLED 'WITCHFINDER GENERAL' BY RONALD BASSETT AND THE POEM BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

© 1968 American International Pictures

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Above: *The Sorcerers* marked one of the first film appearances of Susan George, later to find notoriety in Sam Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs*

Although they meet Reeves, Tenser and Klinger were not impressed with the scripts and declined to commit, which sent Reeves back to the drawing board on an earlier project he had acquired called *Terror for Kicks,* soon to be re-titled *The Sorcerers.*

The script, by John Burke, centred on a former stage hypnotist who invents a mind-control machine enabling him to not only control the minds of his subjects but experience all their sensations and emotions.

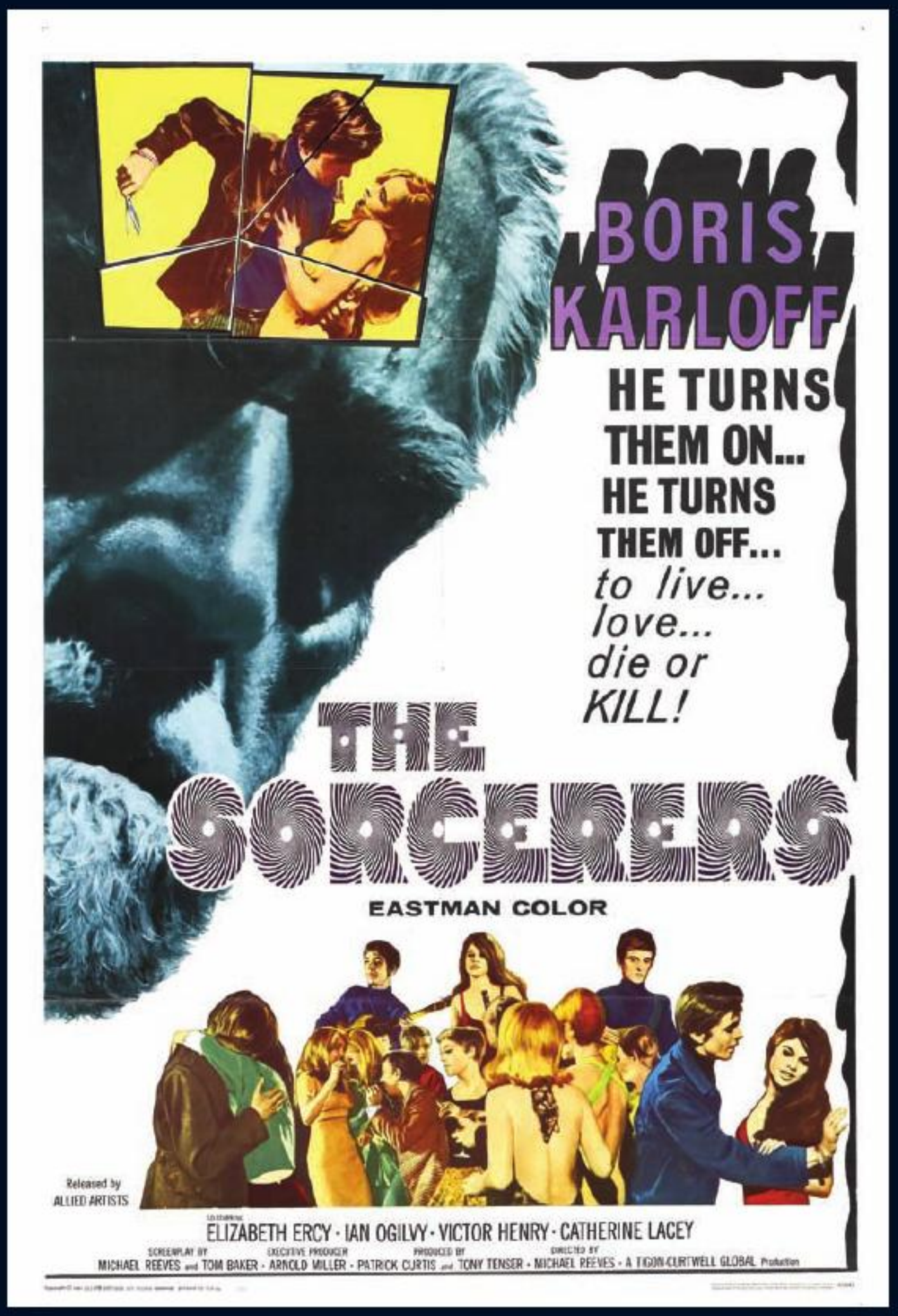
The voyeuristic possibilities played to Tenser's market, as did the fast paced action and plentiful gore, and had just enough naughtiness to put a bit of pep into the trailers.

Apart from its cheapness - Curtis estimated a budget of around £30,000 - the project had one a huge selling point for Tenser: it was to star Boris Karloff. Reeves had flown to Madrid where the horror icon was shooting an episode of the television show *I Spy* and won him over with a mixture of youthful enthusiasm and the sheer breadth of his cinema knowledge.

Karloff's requirements were relatively modest, he wanted £11,000 and he wanted his character, an out and out villain called Marcus Mesmer, re-written, so he was redeemed at the end.

Curtwel put up half the money and asked Tenser to come on board for the remaining 50%, in exchange for the distribution rights and of course a veto over the script, cast and crew. Tenser met Reeves and, like Karloff, was taken with younger man's energy. But he was less convinced about Curtis' abilities as a producer and invited former Compton colleagues Arnold Miller and Stanley Long to join the consortium. Miller would oversee the production while Long, a gifted cameraman who perfected his art in 8mm porno shorts, took on the cinematography.

John Burke was unavailable for re-writes, so while Reeves rushed off to scout locations and hire his cast, the task of accommodating Karloff's revisions was handed to Tom Baker. It was Baker who, working from Reeves' notes, redrew Karloff as Professor Monserrat, a dedicated do-gooder whose honourable intentions are usurped by his conniving wife, Estelle, a desiccated crone who decides, after a lifetime of deprivation, her time for pleasure has arrived.


BORIS KARLOFF
HE TURNS THEM ON... HE TURNS THEM OFF... to live... love... die or KILL!
THE SORCERERS
EASTMAN COLOR
Released by ALLIED ARTISTS
ELIZABETH ERCY · IAN OGILVY · VICTOR HENRY · CATHERINE LACEY
SCREENPLAY BY MICHAEL REEVES and TOM BAKER · EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ARNOLD MILLER · PRODUCED BY PATRICK CURTIS and TONY TENSER · DIRECTED BY MICHAEL REEVES · A TIGON-CURTWELL GLOBAL Production

Baker was subsequently awarded a shared screenplay credit with Reeves while Burke, to his lasting irritation, was demoted to "original idea".

Catherine Lacey played Estelle with a manic cackle while Reeves cast his friend Ian Ogilvy as Mike, the bored, restless youth whose search for new kicks leads him straight from the Wimpy Bar to Monserrat's laboratory. Reeves and Baker had also reworked Burke's depiction of this character originally called 'Mike Moore' into 'Mike Roscoe', a thinly veiled portrait of the director himself, capturing all his impatience, petulance and frenetic energy.

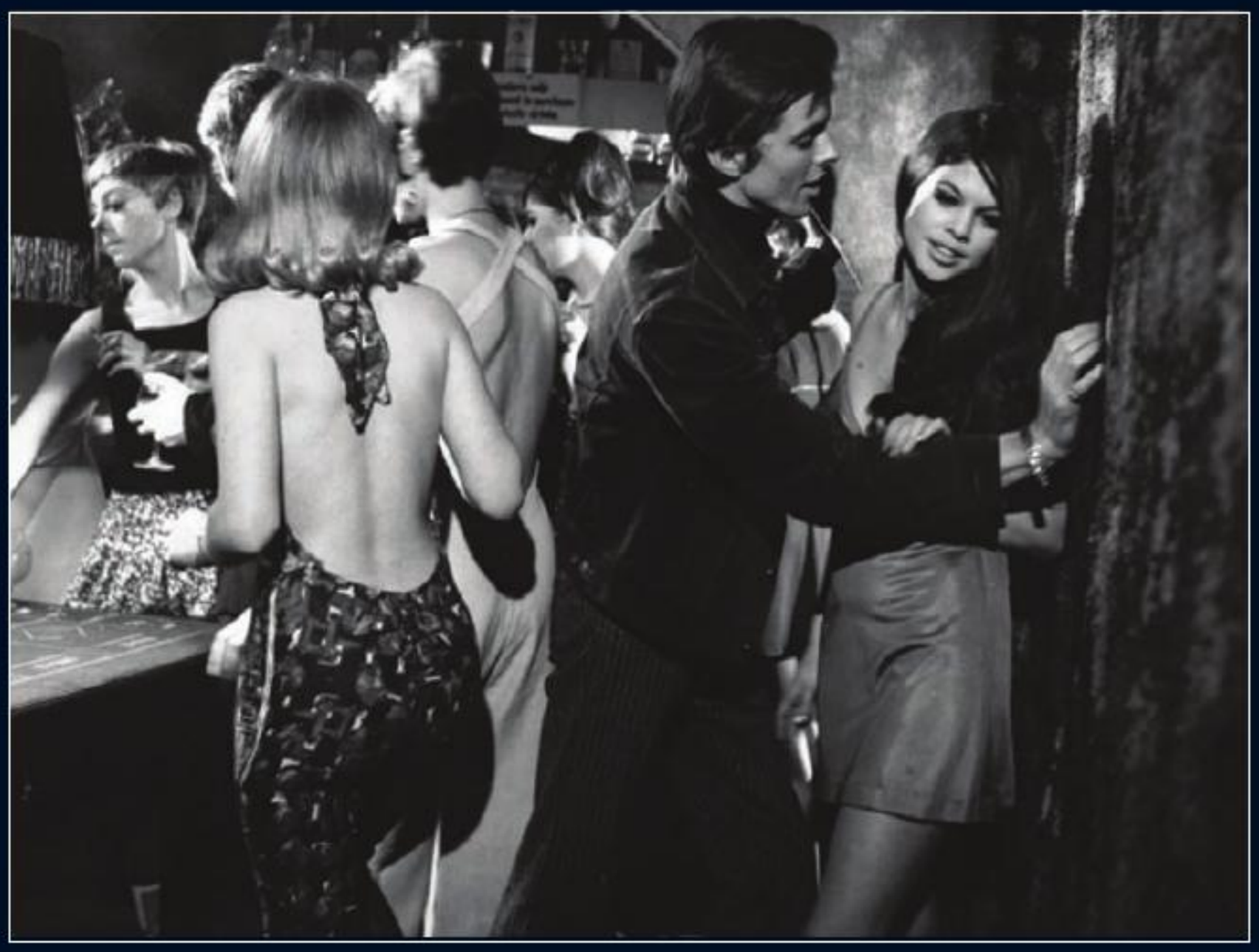
At one point Roscoe speaks for Reeves when he describes himself as "Mercurial Mike, man of many moods." It would be increasingly obvious to his producers that Reeves' energies could be creative or disruptive, depending on the director's mood swings.

The remainder of the supporting cast were made up of professional but relatively unknown (i.e. cheap) actors including Victor Henry, something of a rising star on the West End stage, and 17-year old Susan George who had a small role as one of Mike's former girlfriends, Audrey. Playing Roscoe's current squeeze was imported starlet Elizabeth Ercy, provided by Tony Tenser, who reasoned French actresses always attracted press attention.

Reeves' concept from the outset was one of guerrilla film-making; setting up quickly on chosen locations, shooting the scene and moving to the next location before anyone even realised they were there. The fact that the script was still being reworked as the film started production fitted neatly into this approach, but the director, whose experience was limited to a single low budget Italian horror movie, vastly underestimated the complexities of shooting a film in the centre of London.

Stanley Long saw the flaws developing from the first week of shooting, "Mike didn't know how to plan, there were too many set ups, in too many locations; he didn't have the experience to manage all this, and it showed."

The cast and crew were constantly unpacking and then repacking their gear, jumping into vans and rushing off to the next location without regard for such



Above: Ian Ogilvy puts the moves on Elizabeth Ercy down at the disco in *The Sorcerers*

niceties as film permits. The authorities finally caught up with them when Reeves staged a spectacular explosion on an abandoned building site and someone called the police. Although the film-makers made good their escape, the unfortunate Arnold Miller was summoned to the local police station to explain what was going on.

Reeves' relative inexperience also showed in his treatment of the cast, who were for the most part left to their own devices while the director worked on his next set-up. With Karloff, Reeves was deferential to a man coming to the end of a long and justly celebrated life. The actor was in poor health at the time and looked every one of his 79 years; he had acute emphysema, arthritis in his back and a metal brace on his leg which squeaked when he walked.

Tenser was a frequent visitor to the set and noted that the veteran horror star was never less than a complete professional who never complained, but Stanley Long remembered that even Karloff struggled with Reeves on at least one occasion.

"Mike didn't know how to talk to actors so he usually left them alone," the cameraman said, "which was usually fine and Karloff never fluffed a line, neither did Catherine Lacey for that matter. I did see Karloff angry though, in the scene where he was pushed to the floor and had to crawl towards the door. He was in such pain with his back and couldn't hit his mark and basically he snapped, "I can't do this! Where's the fucking doorway?" That was a shock to hear him say that but it shows just how much he was suffering."

Long also witnessed the darker side of Reeves' character when they came to film the scene where Roscoe kills Audrey. "He went right over the top," Long revealed, "it was supposed to be a violent scene anyway, with Susan screaming and Ogilvy stabbing her, but Mike was throwing blood everywhere, up the walls, over the crew— gallons of the stuff. It was an obsession with him. Susan was literally drenched red."

Before the film started, the British censor John Trevelyan sent a letter to Tenser reminding him that "Our general policy with regard to horror films is that there are two areas which from time to time cause us concern. These are (a) horror laced with sex, and (b) horror which goes over the edge into disgust." The message could not have been clearer and, much to Tenser's annoyance, most of Audrey's murder would be left on the cutting room floor.

The mythology that has grown up around Reeves positions him as an natural born director with an inherent understanding of the art of cinema. At the time of *The Sorcerers,* however, there was a real concern that he would not be able to finish the film. Difficulties over the erratic scheduling and the delays shooting some of the more complex scenes meant the film was behind schedule by the third week.

A summit meeting was called between the producers where they discussed removing him completely. After much discussion and a few terse words, some extra money was found and a chastened director sent off to trim the remaining scenes and wrap the film as soon as possible. The result of all this is a worthy effort, not an exceptional one, but certainly very entertaining, with a remarkable performance from Boris Karloff, who overcomes both infirmity and age to imbue Monserrat with a quiet dignity. Catherine Lacey and Ian Ogilvy both offer fine performances and Reeves imbues the film with a grim and realistic quality, as well as a raw energy that was completely at odds with contemporary fantasy cinema.

They could all feel a little smug with themselves when Tenser announced the film would enjoy a West End premiere, something of a rarity for low budget horror movies. When the film opened at the Carlton, Haymarket in May 1967 on a double bill with *Tower of London* (1962), the critics, for the most part, were less impressed.

The Sun called it a "....utterly silly horror yarn. It is a remarkably bad film," while *The New Statesman* thought it, "Silly even by contemporary standards."

The public were much more responsive, though, and *The Sorcerers* picked up the Grand Prix Internationale at the Sixth Trieste Film Festival; Catherine Lacy was awarded Best Actress and Karloff given a special Gold Medal for services to fantasy films. Tenser was on hand to pick up the prizes and hosted a celebratory dinner when he returned to London for key members of the cast and crew.

Boris Karloff, who had no interest in such 'baubles' as he called them, got first sight of his medal when Tenser delivered it personally some months later in Hollywood. The producer recalls Boris and his wife Evie being thrilled when they learned it was for his body of work.

There was a moment during shooting which was worth no more than a paragraph in the trade magazines at the time, but it was a notable step in the history of the British horror genre.

"I never intended to call the company Tony Tenser Films," Tenser explained, "it was just for convenience while I came up with something better. I wanted to keep the 'T' and I wanted to have a mythical figure in it. The cross between a lion and a tiger is normally called a 'ligon' or a 'liger'; I called it a Tigon and our motif was a lion with strips." Tigon, or Tigon British Productions Ltd as it was more correctly known, had arrived.

MOTH-EATEN MAYHEM

If Reeves challenged the accepted view of horror films with *The Sorcerers* then Tenser showed he wasn't above playing to it. *The Death's Head Vampire* which would ultimately become *The Blood Beast Terror* was about as conventional a horror film as it's possible to imagine, complete with mad scientists and dogged Victorian detectives on the trail of a vampiristic serial killer - who turns out to be an artificially created giant moth.

The script was by Peter Bryan, whose work included some of Hammer's superior efforts *The Brides of Dracula* (1960) and *The Plague of the Zombies* (1966) but who was also responsible for Compton's lame-brained science fiction shocker *The Projected Man* (1966). Though Tenser strenuously denied it, *The Blood Beast Terror* was a blatant attempt by Tigon to elbow their way into the lucrative Hammer horror market, right down to the casting of Peter Cushing in the leading role, a sweetie-chewing pragmatist from Scotland Yard who is called in to investigate the spate of blood-drained corpses cluttering up the Home Counties.

Above: Robert Flemyng is beginning to realise the special effects may not be up to scratch in *The Blood Beast Terror*

Above Right: Wanda Ventham as the moth lady and her much less attractive alter-ego

The director Vernon Sewell was certainly in no doubt: "Hammer were the masters at this sort of stuff," he explained, "so yes, if you were going to make it work you had to crib from them."

Sewell was new to the world of horror movies, although he had made a number of impressive 'B' pictures including *The Man in the Back Seat* (1961) and *Strongroom* (1962) and he had no reservations.

"I liked the script," he insisted, "it was by a good friend of mine, Peter Bryan and I thought it was very clever.

I thought it would be good fun. I said to Tony, if Peter Cushing is in it, I'll do it."

Messrs Miller and Long were recruited to help with the production chores and cinematography respectively and also provide a much needed injection of cash.

Further lustre was added to the cast list when Tigon announced that Basil Rathbone, the screen's best known Sherlock Holmes would essay the villainous Dr Malinger, an celebrated entomologist who, we learn later, has managed to create a half-human/ half moth that feasts on human blood whenever it's passions are aroused- which, given it is an exploitation movie, is a frequent occurrence.

Rathbone was due in London on the 4th of August for his costume fitting before reporting the set at Goldhawk Studios the following Monday. Tragically, the actor suffered a massive heart attack on a stopover in New York and died on 21st of July, leaving Tigon short of a protagonist with only days to go before shooting began.

Stage and screen actor Robert Flemying whose previous encounters with the genre consisted of the lead in *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock* (1962) aka *The Terror of Dr Hichcock*, an early Compton release, stepped in at the last minute to play Malinger. It was hardly the most auspicious of starts for Flemying, and it would certainly colour his view of the film as shooting commenced.

The title role, or at least the human half, was played by Wanda Ventham, who belied her 32 years of age by playing Claire Mallinger with coquettish charm and just a hint of predatory sexuality. The less than human half of the title character was played by an uncredited stunt man in a tatty fancy dress costume.

The photography by Stanley Long was suitably atmospheric, Cushing's performance and in particular the interplay with his long-suffering sergeant (Glynn Edwards) added to the fun, but the film fell apart whenever the moth appeared.

If the costume was bad then the climatic 'moth to flames' scenes was laughable. With no money to speak of, the effects expert Roger Dicken fashioned a crude model that hung lifelessly from a fishing line, dangling in front of the camera. The effects looked so awful in the rushes that Tenser ordered them scrapped and Sewell and Long had to construct an ending using bits of footage left over from earlier shots. The filmmakers were plagued with further difficulties when a fire destroyed one of the sets at Goldhawk studios and they were forced to decamp to Grim's Dyke House for an impromptu staging of the scenes.

Despite all the difficulties, Sewell remained constantly upbeat, as Long testifies, "it was a real pleasure working with Vernon. He was a lovely man, he knew exactly what he was doing. He was very, very experienced and we had a great rapport. He thought through the camera, he knew what you saw was what was in the frame and it didn't matter what was going on outside."

Inevitably the threadbare script and the equally shabby production values had an impact on the cast, and Robert Flemying was particularly downbeat. "He would tell everyone who would listen," Stanley Long reveals, "this film is a piece of shit."

Even the normally sanguine Peter Cushing could not disguise his reservations. "Peter and I hadn't discussed the script at all," Sewell remembered, "which I hadn't thought was unusual, he was a very professional actor. Then after a day Peter came up to me and he obviously wasn't happy. He said, "I think this is perhaps the worst film I have ever made." Well, I felt quite flattered really! There wasn't much else one could say!"

In fairness to Cushing, the actor was at a particular low point both professionally and personally. He had just completed the notorious gorefest *Corruption* (1968), where he played a demented plastic surgeon much prone to slicing open young women and removing their pituitary glands. At one point the first gentleman of fantasy was required to stab a naked prostitute to death and then wipe his bloody hands on her naked breasts.

Cushing's mental wellbeing was put under further pressure by the declining health of his wife, and soon after completing shooting on *Blood Beast* he

From out of their evil passion emerged an irresistible urge for blood.
—EDGAR ALLAN POE
NO ONE IS SAFE... from these DEADLY VAMPIRES!!
a ravishing PSYCHO-FIEND with the diabolical power to turn into a GIANT DEATHSHEAD VAMPIRE feasts on the BLOOD of her Lovers before clawing them to death!
in FRENZIED COLOR
THE VAMPIRE-BEAST CRAVES BLOOD
starring PETER CUSHING ROBERT FLEMYNG WANDA VENTHAM
PLUS DEMONS of the UNDEAD... CURSE OF THE BLOOD-GHOULS
Satan's Horror Henchman ensnare beautiful women through weird ways: of love transforming them into Blood-Ghoul Vampires to satisfy an insatiable LUST.

took an extended leave of absence to care for her.

Whatever he thought about the picture, Cushing was nothing but professional on set; he made refinements to his characterisation and dialogue to make the part more interesting and even re-wrote the lines for Roy Hudd, who had a cameo as a morgue-keeper, to inject some badly needed intentional humour into the film. Cushing's contribution included the closing lines when Sgt Allen and Inspector Quennell watch in disbelief as their quarry is burned to crisp. "They'll never believe this at the Yard," offers Allen, "They'll never believe it anywhere!" Quennell deadpans.

The film opened initially on a bill with *Castle of the Living Dead* (1964) which featured some second unit footage by Michael Reeves, but the response was distinctly underwhelming. Ever the pragmatist, Tenser pulled the film and held it back with the intention of using it as a support feature to another film he had in production at the same time, an altogether more ambitious effort from Mike Reeves.

TIGON VS HAMMER

After completing *The Sorcerers*, Curtis and Reeves resurrected *The Devil's Discord,* a haunted house movie heavily influenced by Mario Bava, now repackaged to star Raquel Welch and Christopher Lee.

Tenser was no more impressed with the script than he had been the first time round, and urged Reeves to think again. In the meantime he had *The Blood Beast Terror* in preproduction and rather cheekily announced that Tigon's next film would be *The Horrors of Frankenstein*, featuring an "international star cast."

The producer later conceded that Tigon did not have a script for the Frankenstein project, he was merely testing the water to see what reaction he would get.

The response from Hammer House was swift and uncompromising, they sent Tigon a stiffly worded letter exercising their prerogative over the character. Although Mary Shelley's book was long out of copyright the films weren't and James Carreras clearly felt a proprietary claim. By then Tigon had moved on. Tenser had been treated to lunch by a former colleague, now at the publishing house Herbert Jenkins Ltd, who happened to have galleys for a new book that he thought would make a terrific film. The book, written by Ronald Bassett, still some months from being published, was a pot-boiler set against the chaos of the English Civil War and featuring the gruesome exploits of a minor historical character called Matthew Hopkins, the self-styled *Witchfinder General.*

Tenser snapped up the rights with the intention of recreating all the elements of *The Sorcerers*: Curwel would be back, as would Miller and Long. Reeves and Baker would direct and write respectively and Boris Karloff would essay the title role.

That vision fell apart almost immediately. Even a perfunctory glance at Bassett's book revealed Karloff was in no physical state to play Hopkins, Curtis and Welch were busy with other projects, and although Stanley Long started out with the best of intentions and duly joined Reeves to scout locations, he quickly remembered why *The Sorcerers* was such a difficult shoot and withdrew his services.

That left Reeves who, although not enamoured with the idea of another horror movie, was excited by the possibilities offered by the tale, another journey into the darker side of man's nature. Reeves saw a Jacobean revenge tragedy played against a bloody struggle; he envisaged raging battles, scarred landscapes and human drama, and he saw Donald Pleasence, who could have epitomised the phrase the 'ordinariness of evil', as the petty, corrupt and corrupting Matthew Hopkins.

Leaving Tenser to set up the deal and Tom Baker to fashion a suitable screenplay, he jumped in his sports car and screeched off to East Anglia hoping to find the unspoiled landscapes he needed for his epic.

Without Curtwel on board Tenser needed a partner and contacted Louis 'Deke' Heyward, the newly installed Head of European Production for AIP, the Hollywood exploitation giants behind Roger Corman's Edgar Allan Poe films and the seemingly endless stream of Beach movies. Heyward had never heard of Reeves but he liked the script and seeing it as an ideal way to announce AIP's presence in London, he secured the agreement of his paymasters Samuel Z Arkoff and James Nicholson to provide £32,000 of the estimated £80,000 budget. In exchange, AIP obtained the North American rights and the right to appoint a suitable star name in the title role. For the company that made, *House of Usher* (1960) and *Pit and the Pendulum* (1961), the term 'star name' was attached to only one actor, Hollywood's favourite bogeyman Vincent Price.

Tenser, who was well versed in the less than subtle art of marketing a film, accepted the American star with good graces, Reeves did not. The immaturity that marked his work on *The Sorcerers* erupted again; "Reeves was still very young," Tenser explained, "and he came from money, a very privileged background so was used to getting what he wanted and films aren't made that way. Film-making is all about compromise, everyone has to compromise."

While Reeves sulked in East Anglia, Heyward was appealing to Price's vanity and assured the actor that his young director, "wafted off in a fairylike cloud of ecstasy when he heard we were casting you in the lead." The battle lines were drawn for a conflict that would last the duration of the shoot.

Even with the AIP money, the budget was tight and Tigon economised by renting World War Two aircraft hangars to use as a production base and to shoot some of the interiors. As much as possible the film was shot in and around the actual locations in Norfolk and Suffolk, including

Above: Peter Cushing called *The Blood Beast Terror* his worst ever horror film and that was indeed saying something. Glynn Edwards of *Minder* is the copper on the right

Above: Vincent Price wasn't particularly happy during the filming of Witchfinder General but it turned out to be one of his best latter-day performances

Above Right: Filming on location in Lavenham, Suffolk

a suitably redressed Lavenham village and Orford Castle; while locals and cadets from the Territorial Army were recruited as extras for the now infamous witch burning scenes.

The crew and cast, including Vincent Price, were housed in a local inn where by all accounts the nightly carousing was more raucous than anything seen on the screen. Having secured the title role for Price, the British were allowed a free hand with the remainder of the cast. Tenser wanted character actors Rupert Davies and Patrick Wymark on board after their success on television in *Maigret* and *The Power Game* and both were available for relatively modest sums. The former came in for a day to play Oliver Cromwell while the latter would be made to earn his fee as John Lowes, a priest victimised by Hopkins and subjected to various degrading tortures.

DIFFERENCES OF OPINION

Reeves was given a free hand to cast the other roles and hired Ian Ogilvy to play the heroic Richard Marshall, a Roundhead trooper who finally tracks down and kills Hopkins. Hilary Dwyer, described by Tenser with his tongue well in cheek as the 'next Vivian Leigh', played the innocent Sara Lowes, used and abused by both Hopkins and his loathsome sidekick Stearne (Robert Russell).

Dywer provided an early controversy for Reeves over his decision to shoot her nude for the love scene, a poignant moment intended as a prelude to the violence. 'It just wasn't done in those days," Dwyer explained, "a few years later, everyone was stripping. I was terrified I spent the whole time thinking, my God, my mum and all her friends are going to see my boobs!"

The differences of opinion over nudity were nothing compared with the open conflict between director and star. Reeves started as he meant to go on by refusing to be part of the welcoming committee at Heathrow airport - a normal courtesy in those genteel days.

He then deliberately shocked Price on the first day of shooting by announcing in front of cast and crew that he had wanted Donald Pleasence for Hopkins.

The atmosphere between star and director, having started off badly, got worse. Price was openly contemptuous and referred to Reeves as "the boy genius", while the director could barely bring himself to talk to Price at all.

Things came to a head with the infamous confrontation when Reeves kept telling the actor to "tone down" his performance without being too specific on what precisely he wanted. According to witnesses Price puffed out his chest and in his distinctive tones bellowed, "Young man, I have made 95 movies, how many have you made?" Reeves' dismissive retort, "two good ones," summed up everything he felt for his star.

Views are mixed on whether Reeves was deliberately goading the star into delivering a more realistic performance or whether he was petulantly taking out his disappointment on the most obvious target. Either way, Price was not amused, and when he fell from his horse and suffered minor bruising he retreated to his bed, refusing to re-emerge until the producers—not the director— had assuaged his hurt pride.

After he shot his last scenes, the bloody climax when Hopkins is hacked to death, Price fled back to London telling anyone who would listen that *Witchfinder General* was a disaster and would be unceremoniously dumped into second run cinemas.

Hilary Dwyer wasn't the only one concerned with nudity, and Reeves was annoyed when he found Tigon insisting on a "continental" version of the tavern scenes. To spare the director's blushes, Reeves was given a leave of absence for the day and two models Tenser had drafted in for the precise purpose of stripping off on screen did exactly what they were paid to do. Everyone it seems was mildly embarrassed by the whole thing and most of the footage consigned to a bottom drawer somewhere in the Tigon offices.

These scenes would be resurrected for a later, much heralded, DVD release, where the English language audience got to finally see just what little difference they made to the narrative.

More than the nudity, Tenser was concerned about the blood-letting and felt distinctly uneasy when he visited the location and saw the buckets of Kensington gore being lined up for the next scene.

"I pulled Michael Reeves aside," Tenser revealed, "and said, Michael you can't do that. I said as realistic as you want to make it, but you can't have a fella's guts spilling out or what looks like guts spilling out. I said the censor won't pass it, you have got this entire scene, and you shot it, all the actors and its going to be cut." Reeves did moderate his approach but it would not save the film from the censor's knife.

The censor was already alerted to potential difficulties with Tigon after early drafts of the script (called *The Witchfinder General*) were greeted with open contempt at the BBFC; one reviewer could barely disguise his disgust and wrote, "This ape Tenser will continue to be a time-wasting nuisance until the board puts him in his place."

Ten days after the BBFC rejected the first script, Tenser had the second in their in-tray, suggesting the first was purely putting down a marker and later revisions of the script toned down the violence further without ever getting close to the sanitised version the censor was suggesting.

TONY TENSER presents
VINCENT PRICE
IAN OGILVY RUPERT DAVIES
WILFRID BRAMBELL
WITCHFINDER GENERAL
WITH
PATRICK WYMARK
AS CROMWELL
ROBERT RUSSELL · NICKY HENSON · AND INTRODUCING HILARY DWYER
Directed by MICHAEL REEVES · Screenplay by TOM BAKER & MICHAEL REEVES · Photography JOHNNY COQUILLON
Music by PAUL FERRIS · From the book by RONALD BASSETT · Producers ARNOLD MILLER-PHILIP WADDILOVE-LOUIS M.HEYWARD · Executive Producer TONY TENSER
RELEASED BY TIGON PICTURES LTD. · A TIGON BRITISH – AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTION
EASTMAN COLOUR

In the meantime Tenser had more pressing concerns, specifically around the budget. Reeves' original intention to shoot the Battle of Naseby had already fallen foul of cost cutting after Tenser allegedly told him to stage the conflict with "six extras and a lot of fog". The battle would be referred to in the dialogue rather than seen on screen. But even those measures didn't keep Reeves to schedule, though unlike with *The Sorcerers* the director was largely exempt from blame.

The decision to shoot in the middle of the English autumn meant that Reeves could have an array of colours for his landscapes, but the production was constantly battling against the elements. They also found that low flying RAF jets ruined take after take. As this was a Tigon film and AIP's commitment was fixed, Tenser had no choice but to absorb the additional costs within his own cash flow and simply chalk it up to experience.

Having finally completed the film, Reeves screened a rough cut for John Trevelyan who was happy to confirm in writing, "I do not think this film is likely to give us much trouble." Despite all his experience, the British censor was vastly underestimating the impact that music and sound effects would have on Reeves' uncompromising staging, to say nothing of the juxtaposition of the stunning cinematography (courtesy of John Cocquillon) and the stark brutality of the violence.

When the finished print was sent for assessment the BBFC felt they had no choice but to request a series of cuts including a reduction in John Lowes' screams, the whole sequence showing the strangulation of a female prisoner, cuts to the witch burning scenes and the vicious slaying of Hopkins.

In a letter to the censor dated 7th of April 1968, Reeves set out his argument for the brutality in his film saying, 'its overall message is as anti-violence as it can be. Violence breeds violence, and that end – violence - is insanity.

To put that over to a paying audience, particularly one who is paying to enjoy a vicarious thrill from once-removed sadism, surely this cannot be anything but moral?"

The negotiations continued in a businesslike fashion, helped no doubt by the friendship and mutual admiration that had built up between Tenser and Trevelyan over the years. In a classic case of gamekeeper turned poacher, Trevelyan when he retired from the BBFC in 1970 joined the board at Tigon!

SADISTIC EXTRAVAGANCE

Witchfinder General was finally awarded its 'X' certificate on 26th of April 1968, but the censorship debate was really just beginning.

The press were predictably outraged and although some critics saw the intelligence at work most were disgusted by the visuals. *The Sunday Telegraph* called it, "an exercise in sadistic extravagance all the more repugnant for being ably directed," while *The Guardian's* critic thought; "the film is less concerned with narrative than exploiting every opportunity for gratuitous sadism, lingering over hangings, protracted torture sessions, rape and mutilations."

Allan Bennett then took up the cudgel on behalf of Middle England and attacked the film with such vitriol in *The Listener* that Reeves felt compelled to respond.

This was all grist to the mill for the Tigon marketing team, the more damning the reviews the more they could use them to build up the film. When one local council decided to ban it, Tenser took out adverts in the local press telling the public which cinemas were showing it in adjacent areas.

Safely ensconced in Hollywood, Vincent Price had the opportunity to see what an impact Reeves' constant provocation had on his performance, and to his credit he took the time to write to the director and compliment him on the finished work.

The actor later summed up the experience of working with Reeves in an interview with *Classic Images* in 1992 saying, it was "a very sad experience...he was very unstable...difficult but brilliant."

The version that Price had seen was slightly different from the British version; AIP had exercised their option to cut the film any way they liked and had added a prologue with Price reading some lines from a Poe poem. The film was then re-titled *The Conquer Worm* and released as the next in the Poe series; Deke Heyward awarded himself an "additional scenes" credit for that masterstroke!

By the time the cash registers started ringing for *Witchfinder General,* Tenser had offered Reeves a long-term contract and was confident enough to announce they would be collaborating on *Hooligans Mob* and *The Amorous Trooper,* another novel by Ronald Bassett.

Before starting on his Tigon movies, Reeves was committed to AIP for *The Oblong Box,* which reunited him with Vincent Price and Hilary Dwyer. Both Tenser and Heyward were aware that Reeves was battling his own demons. The medication he was taking had led to mood swings on both the Tigon pictures and continued to blur his judgement as he started pre-production on the AIP film. Before a frame had been shot, Heyward had Reeves removed from the director's chair, which further undermined his fragile self-confidence, but Tenser continued to support the younger man and was confident he would soon be back in the Tigon office to discuss preparation on his next movie.

That expectation was tragically shattered when the phone rang on the 11th February and Tenser was informed that Reeves had died from an apparent drug overdose. He was only 25 years old.

DREAMS IN THE WITCH HOUSE

After the success of *Witchfinder General*, Tigon and AIP had wasted no time in getting their next project together, a loose adaptation of H P Lovecraft's *The Dreams in the Witch House*, which would ultimately hit the screens as *Curse of the Crimson Altar*. AIP already had a script by science fiction writer Jerry Sohl which

Vincent Price: *"Young man, I have made 95 movies, how many have you made?"*
Reeves' dismissive retort, *"Two good ones!"*

WHAT OBSCENE PRAYER or HUMAN SACRIFICE can SATISFY THE DEVIL-GOD?
The Master of Evil in his last and most shocking role!
BORIS KARLOFF
CHRISTOPHER LEE
The CRIMSON CULT
MARK EDEN · BARBARA STEELE · MICHAEL GOUGH
VIRGINIA WETHERELL · RUPERT DAVIES · COLOR
VERNON SEWELL · MERVYN HAISMAN and HENRY LINCOLN · GERRY LEVY · TONY TENSER · LOUIS M. HEYWARD
A TIGON BRITISH AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTION
AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL

Above Right: Horror icon Barbara Steele presides over black magic rituals in Tigon's *Curse of the Crimson Altar*

they had announced at various points over the years, but the decision to shoot in England meant a major re-vamp at the hands of Mervyn Haisman and Henry Lincoln, best known as *Dr Who* writers. Vernon Sewell, who had proved such a safe pair of hands with *The Blood Beast Terror*, was brought in to direct, and much to his delight he was allocated John Cocquillon as cinematographer.

"I'd known Johnny for years," Sewell said, "a very good young man and he wasn't afraid to try new things, clipping lights on walls and so on. I used to go for that a lot; I don't like floods of lights and all that nonsense."

Cocquillon, who would become the cameraman of choice for Sam Peckinpah, found his ingenuity tested by Tigon's decision to shoot the film at Grim's Dyke House, but he managed to make the 19th century mansion seem a labyrinth of dark recesses and secret passages. Cocquillon's efforts prompted a line of dialogue where one character says, "It's like a house from one of those old horror films". "It's like Boris Karloff is going to pop up at any moment," comes the retort.

That deathless exchange was a late inclusion to the screenplay by Tigon's resident script doctor Gerry Levy, and was a rather chunky introduction to the star of the proceedings — Boris Karloff himself, who despite being largely confined to a wheelchair and dependent on oxygen from a cylinder kept permanently at his side, took pride of place at the top of the cast list. Predictably Tenser could not get insurance for the 80-year old actor so, setting aside the implications of the billing and the subsequent promotional material, Karloff's contribution was kept peripheral to the main action and his role of occult expert Professor Marsh is primarily a red herring to distract the audience from a more obvious villain in the shape of Christopher Lee.

Karloff's heir apparent was cast as Morley a morose figure much given to skulking around in his library while his niece, Eve (Virginia Wetherall), throws lively parties for the local "kids".

The role was hardly a stretch for the star and he later explained, "Boris was already a sick man but his courage, sheer guts and superb professionalism were literally boundless. I made this film simply to be with him before he left us."

The story has an antique dealer called Robert Manning investigating the mysterious disappearance of his brother whose last known location was the Morley house. Mixed up in the intrigue somehow are the mentally challenged butler, Elder, and a green-tinged witch, Lavinia, who only appears whenever Manning falls asleep.

Determined to create an all star jamboree, Tenser hired Michael Gough as Elder and persuaded cult favourite Barbara Steele to don the body paint as the long dead Lavina, burned at the stake several hundred years earlier. None of this makes much sense but it is gamely played by the principles, particularly Karloff who proved himself a trooper in what would be his last appearance in a British picture.

"I felt for him very much," Sewell later remembered: "He said to me, 'Look here Vernon, do you think I could walk from here to there. I don't want the audience to see me in a wheelchair?' I said, 'I suppose so' and he staggered across and when he got there he almost passed out with the effort."

The narrative plods along at a gentle pace, briefly livened with some mild S&M sequences, which featured prominently in the film's advertising, and a flash of nudity, care of Virginia Wetherell's body double. But, despite the distractions, one is left feeling somewhat underwhelmed by the film's most vaunted teaming of the "King, the Crown Prince and Queen of Horror."

007 MEETS BARBARELLA

Sewell was no better served by his only other venture into the fantasy world of Tigon when Tenser asked him to help out on a science fiction film that was causing him some concerns. *Zeta One* was one of the more ambitious Tigon movies, at least in its design.

Adapted from a comic strip, the script by director Michael Cort was intended as a spoof on James Bond crossed with *Barbarella,* the sort of collision between broad humour and soft-core sex that became extremely popular in the mid-1970's.

The story has something to do with secret agent James Word being called in to investigate what would appear to be an invasion by scantily clad space sex vixens. More earthbound villainy came in the unlikely shape of bondage obsessed criminal mastermind, James Robertson Justice, and his obsequious sidekick played by *Carry On* star Charles Hawtrey, a late replacement for Frankie Howerd whose agent had wisely talked him out of it. Her Majesty's Secret Service had recruited former Hammer actor Robin Hawdon and amongst the starlets squeezed into lycra and wigs were Dawn Addams, Valerie Leon and Anna Gael. As a concept it was an entertaining enough mix, but Cort, under pressure to meet the scheduled start date, assembled his cast and crew at the Camden Studios before the script had been finished.

To make matters worse, the studio, a former wallpaper factory, was still in the throes of a major refurbishment which meant a number of the key sets would not be available. Cort, who was making his feature film debut, improvised as best he could, but the ill-thought out script and poorly realised set-pieces meant the assembled film delivered to Tigon was an unreleasable mess.

Tenser was not about to write-off his investment, so a wraparound sequence was hurriedly written and Hawdon was recalled to spend two days playing strip poker with Yutte Stensgaard; Vernon Sewell had the thankless task of making sense out of the garbled narrative.

The newly reconstructed film was marginally more comprehensible

Left: The bodies pile up and the women take charge in *Zeta One*, also known as *The Love Factor*

but despite generous coverage (and uncoverage in the girlie mags) it was something of a blessing when it sunk without a trace almost the moment after it opened. In the 1990's, when *Zeta One* was dug out of the vault and released as a curiosity piece, *Loaded* magazine hailed it as, "the worst British film ever made."

Tigon proved they were anything but predictable with their other 1960's shot at science fiction, originally called *Thin Air* and re-titled *The Body Stealers,* the company's first attempt at courting a family audience.

Tenser was busy producing a sex comedy called *What's Good for the Goose* (1968) when he was approached by Henry White and Edgar Bronfman's Sagittarius Films with an offer to co-finance a script called *Thin Air,* by American writer Mike St Clair. Since Sagittarius had the serious financial muscle of the Seagram whisky empire behind them, Tenser decided it was too good an opportunity to miss.

Gerry Levy was slated to direct and, working under the nom de plume Peter Marcus, he rewrote Mike St Clair's script to transfer *Thin Air*'s Californian settings to England, Anglicise the characters and lighten the tone so that it would land that all important 'A' certificate.

It was also Levy who hired actor Patrick Allen to play Bob Megan a maverick NATO trouble shooter brought in to resolve the mysterious disappearances of military parachutists — in mid-free fall. After the brief flirtation with a beautiful but mysterious blonde, Megan, sporting a nice line in knitwear, is soon on hot on the trial of the culprits, the advance guard of an alien invasion force. Allen had starred in a number of movies including Hammer's *Captain Clegg* (1962) but at the time he was best known as the title character in the popular television series *Crane.*

"I suppose I was typecast," Allen explained, "as the hero, I was constantly referred as 'lantern jawed hero'. But I didn't mind, I liked working."

Tenser's Vivien Leigh, Hilary Dwyer was back for her second Tigon movie, and no doubt relieved to hear the 'A' certificate meant no topless shots. Dwyer played Julie Slade, a dedicated and straitlaced scientist who seemed more interested in close encounters with aliens than with the macho hero.

With Sagittarius footing half the bill, Tigon could shoot the film at Shepperton rather than on location and it also meant they could afford a more impressive cast than usual. Another familiar face, Robert Flemying played a stoic military type alongside former Hollywood star George Sanders, now reduced to slumming in Euro-trash to pay for his multiple divorces.

"George was a gentleman," Allen insists. "He had been a big star, an Oscar winner for goodness sake, but there was no attitude, he knew what the film was, he came in, was perfectly nice and pleasant and seemed to be enjoying himself."

The military presence was made up by Neil Connery, lesser known brother of the James Bond star, who was enjoying a fleeting moment of screen fame. None of the three of them were required to do much more than look through their binoculars and throw the occasional troubled look at each other.

Ranged against them was the distinguished Broadway actor Maurice Evans who was perhaps best known to horror fans for *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), and there was also a role for former swimsuit model Lorna Wilde, brought in by Tenser to add some mild titillation during a moonlight clinch with Patrick Allen. Despite the presence of Roy Ashton, Hammer's leading make-up expert, the aliens do not hide behind elaborately designed make-up, with Tigon opting for the far more cost effective human form. Levy directed the action sequences with some gusto, but he was ultimately defeated by a script that, despite some enthusiastic screaming from Hilary Dwyer, stubbornly failed to create any tension.

"Please don't ask me what was going on," Patrick Allen said in 2004, "I didn't know then and I certainly don't know now!"

Logic of course isn't a requisite for a successful film and Tenser happily talked the film up to the press, insisting Tigon had produced "a very commercial picture" and adding, "we needed a very commercial title so we changed it to *Invasion X*". By the time the film was being readied for release, the title had changed again to the much more literal *The Body Stealers.*

Tigon secured another Mike St Clair project, *Mission to Mars*, to make up a double bill that they hoped would cash in on the public's intense fascination with the Apollo space programme. Tenser dreamed up the slightly misleading tagline 'the first ever great OUTER SPACE PROGRAMME' and even had the artwork redrawn to suggest Patrick Allen was playing an astronaut!

The critics weren't fooled. *Films and Filming* thought "any incidental tension is frittered away in the unintentional humour of scripting absurdities." *Time Out* thought there was, "...too much vapid chat and too little action, ending very feebly (in a British sort of way.)"

The Body Stealers was a modest success for Tigon in the UK but the performance overseas reinforced Tenser's view that horror movies were an easier sell and in the eyes of the Hollywood moguls Britain was still seen as the market leader.

In 1968 Tigon embarked on what Tenser thought was just another modestly budgeted horror film, it proved to be one of the most controversial films Tigon ever made, it almost ended the career of its director before it really began and it finished any hope Tenser had of a long-term relationship with AIP.

Coming up next issue in *Tigon Terrors Part 2: The Haunted House of Horror* brings the curtain down on Tigon/AIP, while Linda Hayden unleashes *The Blood on Satan's Claw* and Tony Tenser decides to buy Hammer Film Productions.

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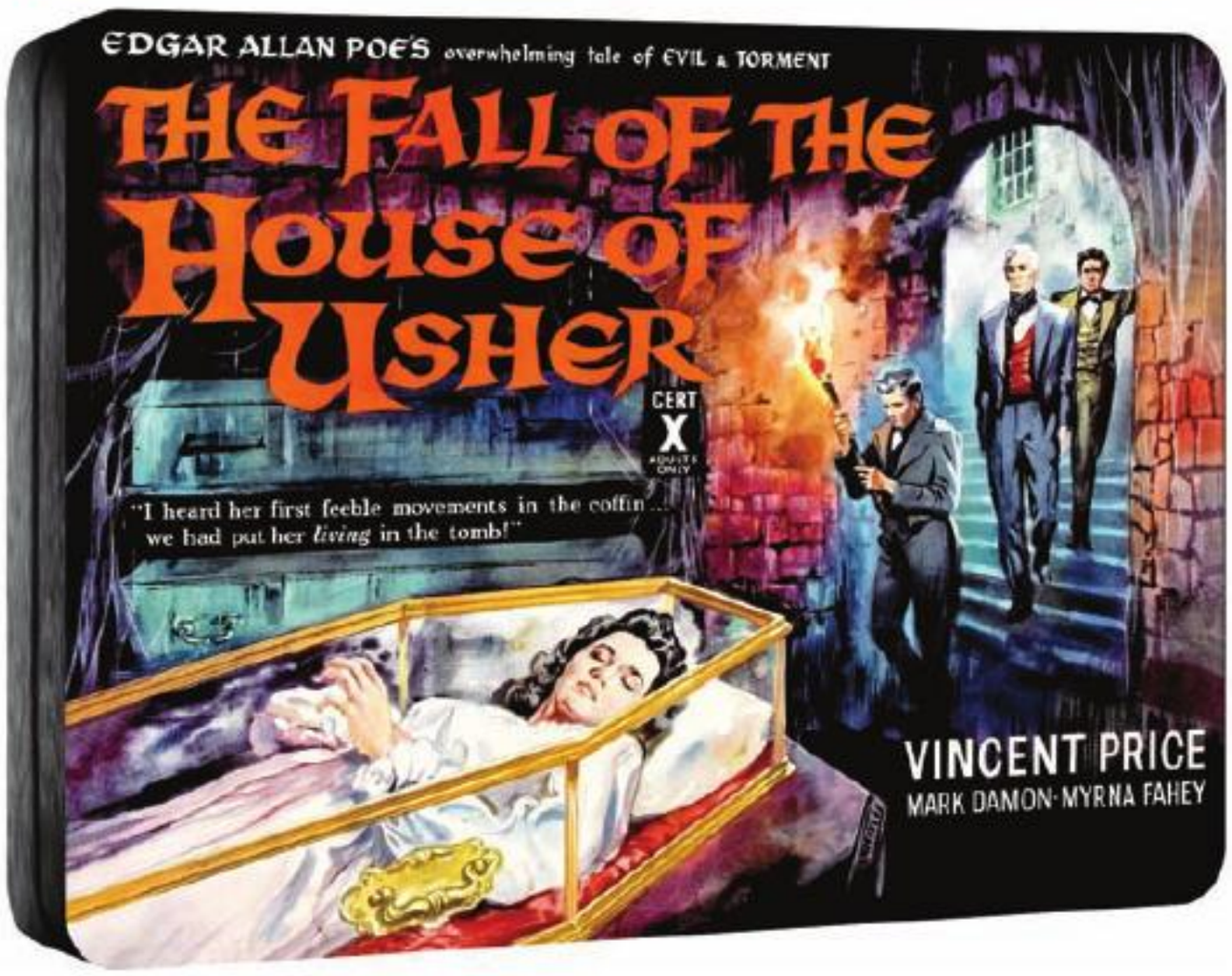
The latest genre-related DVD and Blu-ray releases reviewed by the redoubtable **James Kloda** and our esteemed editor **Allan Bryce**


EDGAR ALLAN POE'S overwhelming tale of EVIL & TORMENT
THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER
CERT X
"I heard her first feeble movements in the coffin... we had put her *living* in the tomb!"
VINCENT PRICE
MARK DAMON · MYRNA FAHEY

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER (1960)
Blu-ray and DVD.
Out Now. Arrow. Certificate: 15.

Once upon a midnight dreary, as Roger Corman pondered, weak and weary, about whether he'd ever be able to graduate from making cheapie monster flicks for American International Pictures, gently rapping into his mind came the idea of making a 'respectable' horror movie based on the classic stories of Edgar Allan Poe.

The one he chose to film first was possibly Poe's most famous tale, *The Fall of the House of Usher,* and after some initial resistance the AIP Drive-In movie kings actually stumped up a decent budget of $350,000 so he could make it in colour and Cinemascope in a luxurious 15 days. It proved to be a critical and commercial hit that launched Corman on a whole series of Poe flicks, in the process cementing Vincent Price's late-blooming career as a horror superstar, which had begun a couple of years earlier with *The Fly* and *The House On Haunted Hill.* Here Price gives one of his least hammy performances, which is quite a feat since he looks sort of like a campy faded Liberace as the creepy white-haired Roderick Usher, living in virtual seclusion in the crumbling mansion of the title with his glam but glum Liz Taylor lookalike sister Myrna Fahey.

One day Fahey's handsome fiancee Mark Damon turns up. How he got together with her in the first place we'll never know, but Price is not best pleased. He reveals that he and his sister both suffer from a bizarre madness that must not be carried on by future generations. Yep, seems like there's a big hole in this family's bag of marbles. Damon sticks around even though a series of mysterious accidents make it appear someone is trying to kill him. Then Fahey falls ill and seemingly dies, and her body is sealed in the family crypt. Is she really dead though, or has she been buried alive? Hey, it's a literary classic, this, so you should know the answer already. Let's just say the film's big shock scene imitates the one great horror moment in Val Lewton's *Isle of the Dead* (1945) - fans of the BBC 2 Horror Double Bills will be tapping their noses knowingly. Corman famously sold the AIP execs on the idea of making *Usher* by describing it as a monster film where the house itself is the monster. It certainly comes across that way too, with Daniel Haller's marvellously cobwebby and atmospheric sets and Floyd Crosby's garish colour camerawork making it the physical representation of Price's madness - the big crack down the side of the place being a thumpingly obvious metaphor for the crack in Vince's brain. Of course when he dies, the house dies too. As an exercise in fog-shrouded claustrophobia this can't be beaten, but while the film is a tour-de-force for Price, the supporting players are only adequate. When Corman later came to England to make *The Masque of the Red Death* - in my view the best of his Poe films by a country mile - he had the advantage of a fabulous cast of English actors who added real gravitas to the piece. The secondary players here, with the exception of the guy who plays the butler, are more the B-movie types that Corman used as a matter of routine. Fortunately the late, great Richard Matheson's first-rate script manages to paper over the acting cracks, being both literate and energetic, and moving things along at a fair old clip. *The Fall of the House of Usher* has been filmed many times over the years but this version has never been bettered.

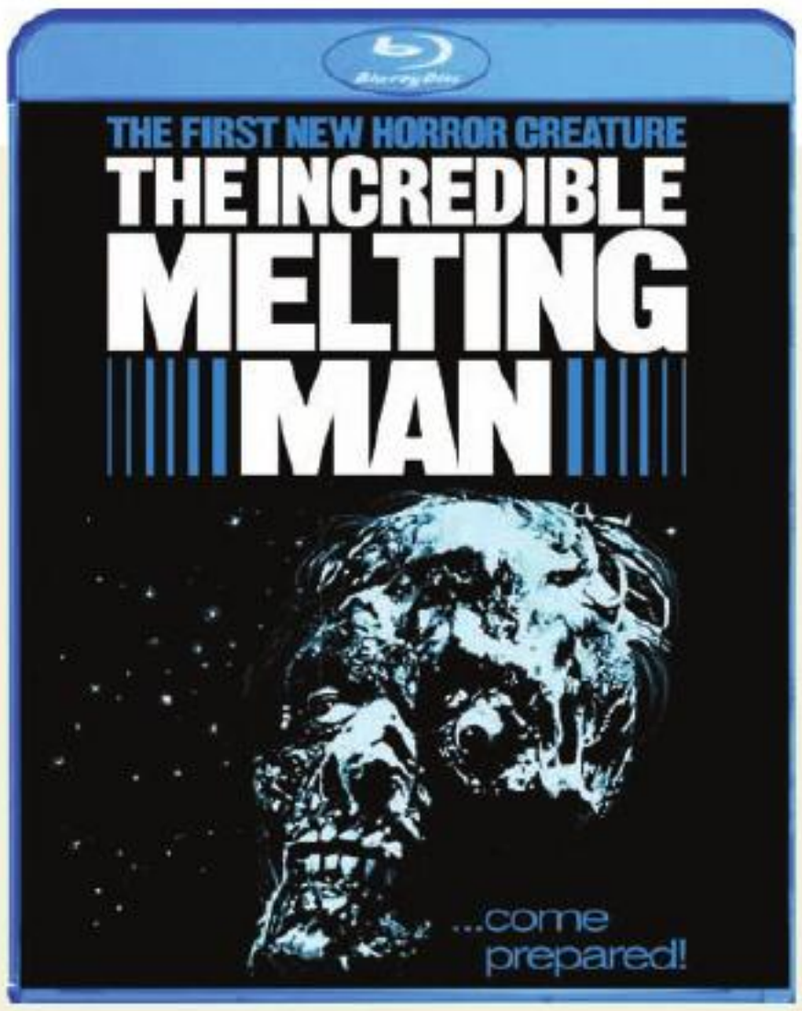
It's great to see the film arriving on Blu-ray at last from Arrow, who have done a truly spectacular job here. Most of the Poes have been showing up in HD versions on satellite but this is the first one to make it to Blu-ray and I can't imagine a better transfer. It looks absolutely gorgeous, even through all that studio fog. Well done Arrow, now give us the rest of the Corman Poes as well, pretty please.

Extras: This *Limited Edition SteelBook* has an audio commentary with Roger Corman, who is always great to listen too and sharp as a tack despite his advanced years. There's also a fun interview with director and former Corman apprentice Joe Dante, a real fan and obviously lovely guy who loves doing this stuff and gives great value on camera. He chats about his years making trailers for Corman and how he was frustrated in trying to get to meet him back in the 60s. The brilliant and effortlessly engaging Jonathan Rigby is a terrific choice to talk about the film in another on-camera extra because as always he offers some amazing insights that make you slap your forehead and say, 'Why didn't I think of that?' Of course this writer's detractors will probably offer the Oscar Wilde riposte of 'You will, dear fellow, you will."

Fragments of The House of Usher is a specially-commissioned video essay by critic and filmmaker David Cairns examining Corman's film in relation to Poe's story, and there's an archival interview with Vincent Price himself and an original trailer.

The icing on the cake is a collectors' booklet featuring new writing on the film and an extract from Vincent Price's long out of print autobiography, illustrated with original archive stills and posters. This is an absolutely essential buy, and it brings new respect for Arrow as a world class distributor of classic genre movies. Long may their house rise. **AB.**

THE INCREDIBLE MELTING MAN (1978)
Blu-ray and DVD.
Out Now.
Shout! Factory/www.movietyme.com.
Certificate: N/A



If ever a film was ripe for a David Cronenberg remake it's this gross "body horror" flick from the 70s. A gory update of *The First Man Into Space,* it stars Alex Rebar (later a regular in TV soap, *The Young and the Restless*) as an astronaut with a wicked moustache who catches a space virus that causes his flesh to literally melt off his bones.

Rebar and two other astronauts make the Icarus-like mistake of flying too close to the rings of Saturn, and in a plot twist similar to *The Quatermass Experiment* he is the only one of the trio to return to Earth afterwards. Was Ryan Air backing this flight?

While Richard Wordsworth's Victor Caroon (*Quatermass*) took a fair old while to change into a monster, Rebar loses his humanity at the drop of a hat, or maybe that should be an ear. Tearing the bandages off his gloopy face he chases a fat nurse down a hospital corridor in slow-motion and makes her pay for not exercising enough.

Thereafter he wanders the nearby countryside polishing off innocent bystanders, pursued by scientist Burr DeBenning and Sheriff Michael Alldredge, who follow the trail of slime and discarded body parts - that moustache doesn't last very long - through the woods to an industrial complex where the final showdown takes place.

The only thing to wax lyrical about here is Rick Baker's yukky makeup, but it can't compensate for a poorly developed and often laughable script that dissolves into a stodgy mess quicker than the title character and fails to generate one ounce of sympathy for either the Melting Man or his generally stupid victims.

Having said that, the gore itself is probably enough reason to add this to your collection. I'm still not sure how the Melting Man finds his way around after his eyes start falling out, but the best gross-out scene sees a fisherman's severed head thrown into the river and drift downstream at a leisurely pace until it splatters apart on rocks!

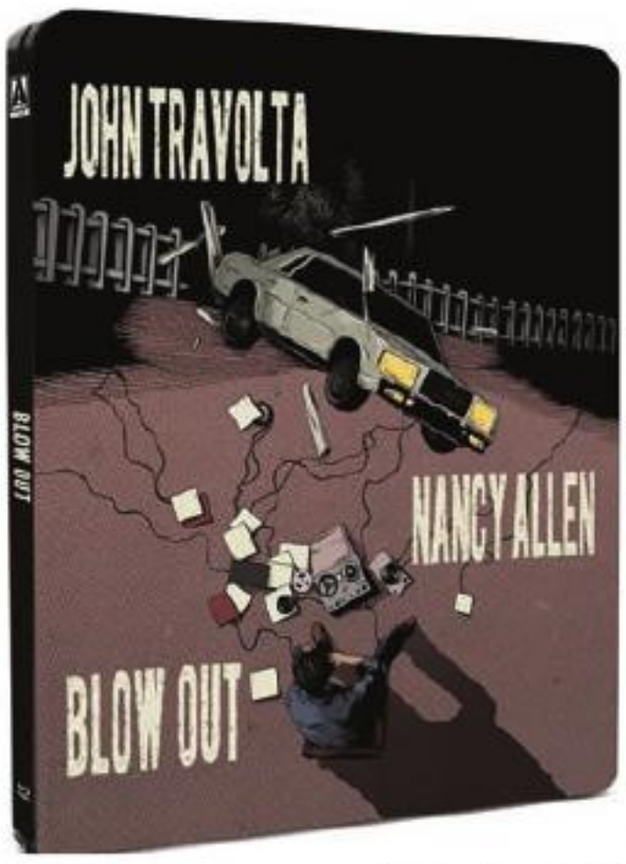
On an interesting trivia note, also in the cast is Jonathan Demme, long before he won an Oscar for directing *Silence Of The Lambs.*

Produced by Max J. Rosenberg (after he had split from his long-time Amicus partner Milton Subotsky) and written and directed by William Sachs, the film has a bland TV-movie feel about it despite all the gore. Shout! Factory's Blu-ray looks terrific though, with a pin-sharp 1.78:1 image and lovely bright colours throughout. The audio is also noticeably crisp and clear.

Extras: Writer/director Sachs provides an interesting and rather bitter commentary that reveals the many problems he had making the movie. The producers were meddlesome to say the least and demanded reshoots, scuppering his idea to present an EC Comics-style comedy horror. He's still getting no respect these days as the Blu-ray company have spelled his name wrong on one of an accompanying 20-minute featurette in which Sacks, er, we mean Sachs repeats some of the stuff he has already said on the commentary. Rick Baker is also interviewed in this and says that he didn't really want to do the film at the time and so asked for a ridiculous fee - which they promptly agreed!

Baker's assistant Greg Cannom turns up on camera in a very brief additional short talking about the movie, which marked his very first feature. There's also a photo gallery, some radio spots and theatrical trailers which advise audiences to "Come prepared." We'd say that translates as "Don't expect too much." **AB.**

BLOW OUT (1981) Blu-ray/ Steelbook
Out Now. Arrow Video.
Certificate: 18.



As a camera stalks around outside a cabin full of bare-breasted co-eds, breathing heavily as it observes the hedonism within before its operator stabs someone in the back, it is apparent that we are immersed in psycho-slasher point-of-view.

Moving inside and approaching a girl in the shower, the excited wheeze becomes almost static interference as she is about to be penetrated by cold steel: victim turns, spies dodgy cameraman and... "eek!"

Cut to John Travolta, laughing in a screening room at the anti-climactic caterwaul. This will not be the first time Brian De Palma will wrong-foot his audience: *Blow Out* is an art-thriller concerned with the mechanics of cinema and the ease with which the crafted audio-visual can manipulate and deceive our senses.Travolta plays Jack Terry, laconic sound designer working on crummy B pictures. Whilst out recording sounds in a night-hushed park, he hears a screech and watches as a car careens off-road into a river. Reacting quickly, Terry manages only to save the passenger, a girl called Sally (Nancy Allen, a beguiling mixture of precocious innocence). The driver was Governor McRyan, dead cert to win the upcoming election: Terry is told to forget about his escort for what it might do to the all-American-family-man's posthumous reputation. Suspicion piqued, he listens to the tape of the incident and distinctly recognises the sound of tyres being shot out. But where there's a conspiracy there's cover-up, and the assassin is still at large...

Many see De Palma as sub-Hitchcock mimic, both in style and sexual obsession. *Blow Out* suggests that there is a lot more to the filmmaker, updating Coppola's masterful *The Conversation* into an oddly romantic meta-giallo. There is much technical panache on display, especially in the violent, lurid scenes of extended murder, yet it is fully integrated into the overarching conceptual conceits. The camera takes in simultaneous action amongst fluid crane shots or zooms in from the street below to observe action through a window: the sense of gliding surveillance is uneasily comprehensive. And there is a strong urge of helpless inevitability to the proceedings: over the opening credits, split-screen is deployed as Terry edits sound effects ('shot', 'body', fall') as a TV broadcast reports on McRyan's candidacy for presidency, slyly presaging his demise; the persistently sleazy red-white-and-blue colour scheme, Old Glory whored by hustlers, finally soundtracking the tragic conclusion.

That anomaly is perfectly apt in a film where the main character is described as an "ear witness". As Terry initially listens back to and re-enacts the recording, his pencil replacing the shotgun mic (similar to Hitchcock, De Palma likes his phallic extensions), the interpretation of what happened is articulated through close-ups of his eyes. Similarly, through use of a split dioptre, enabling both near and far depths of field to stay in focus, a visual technique is used to show that the subject is overhearing the dialogue in the background. With faculties thus confused, just what has been witnessed? A conversation, an assassination; real or imagined? Or a dubious assembly of imagery and sound? (A clever sleight-of-hand has Terry putting together photographs of the 'accident' and playing them back as film synced with his tape to find the gun flash, the discrepancy in frame rate forgotten amongst the persuasive montage of drama.)Either way, *Blow Out* is an exhilarating, cunning collage that straddles genre satisfaction and existential intrigue. Beginning with an over-excited point-of-view and finishing at the perfect scream, it stokes voyeuristic pleasure and questions the price we have to pay for it. De Palma is no mere mimic.

Extras: In-depth interviews: Cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond talking about the difficulties of achieving the technical ambition; Composer Pino Donaggio, precise about musical detail and articulation; Producer George Litto, all too brief, but patently larger-than-life; Nancy Allen who reminisces with warmth. **JK.**

WEIRD ADVENTURES (1961/1972/1978)
DVD. Out Now. BFI. Certificate: U.

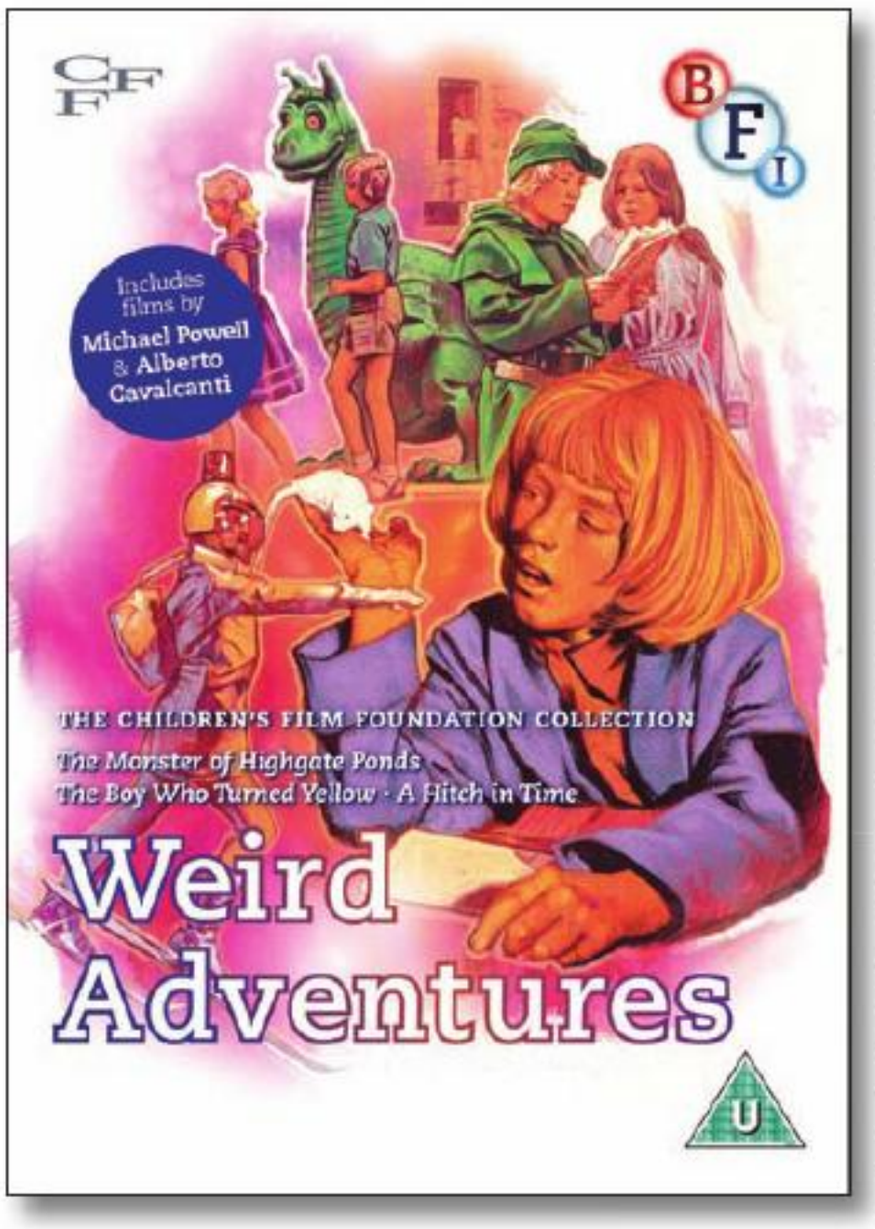
As eager church bells ring, pigeons flee in anticipation from their perch in a quiet London square. This was the glorious image that heralded the tales of plucky derring-do and fantastic whimsy that constituted the output of the Children's Film Foundation. In *Weird Adventures,* the BFI's esoteric collection of monochrome dinosaurs and kaleidoscopic time travel, the underlying factor is actually something commonplace and quintessentially British. The humble cup of tea.

"I'll do anything for a 'kipper'-tie."

Nothing to do with a Black Country accent (CFF films were set firmly in the home-counties), this retort is given as the exhausting attempts by two oafish crooks to kidnap a Nessie-style creature are finally rewarded by its predilection for oily fish. Directed by Alberto Cavalcanti, who was responsible for the chilling ventriloquism segment in *Dead Of Night, The Monster Of Highgate Ponds* (1961) is a crisply photographed, leisurely adventure concerning three moppets who are given an exotic egg by their explorer uncle that hatches into a rapidly-evolving prehistoric pet (wiggled toy dino, Rod Hull arm puppet, S-necked cuddly submarine, man-in-a-lizard-suit). The cute stop-motion courtesy of prominent British animators Halas & Batchelor is a charming asset, 'Beauty', for that's what she is, all rolling doe-eyes and mother-yearned bleating (even if this takes on an occasional demonic tone).

"Doesn't sound like my cup of kilowatts."

An illegal excursion to the Tower of London to rescue a pet mouse probably does not feature on most people's bucket list. But the unusual vernacular spoken by Nic (from '*Electronic*'), a jaundiced Kenny Everett on skis, is due to him being yellow. (And an electrical sprite, but how the two are inter-related is anyone's guess: perhaps


CFF
BFI
Includes films by Michael Powell & Alberto Cavalcanti
THE CHILDREN'S FILM FOUNDATION COLLECTION
The Monster of Highgate Ponds
The Boy Who Turned Yellow · A Hitch in Time
Weird Adventures
U

The Boy Who Turned One Half Of Earth Insulation read wrong.) The last film to be directed by Michael Powell (*Peeping Tom*) is possibly one of his, and screenwriting collaborator Emeric Pressburger's, most distinctive works: it displays their adoration of surreal fantasy, dry wit and evocative colour to tell a story. Here, the tale is educational, swashbuckling and mischievous: an older man's nostalgia for the classroom daydream.

"Seeing as you're here, would you like a cup of tea?"

The year is 1941 and young Fiona has unexpectedly crash-landed in an air-raid shelter: the polite offer is from her grandfather who's manning it. Deftly scripted by Ealing stalwart T. E. B. Clarke (*Passport To Pimlico, The Lavender Hill Mob*), *A Hitch In Time* is unadulterated, hi-jinks fun. Patrick Troughton gamely riffs on his most famous role as an eccentric inventor of time travel, in this case courtesy of OSKA (Oscillating Shortwave Kinetic Amplifier), sending two spirited kids on excursions to places such as Waterloo, the Civil War and Stone Age: there is no incongruity of modern dress as they have access to the school play's entire costume store.

This is history viewed through the winsome lens of family ancestors eternally battling those of childhood bullies, in this case bothersome teacher 'Sniffer' Kemp. The different eras visited are skimmed through as spirited larks and the curt rebuffs of OSKA toward his doltish programmer are priceless. Plus you get to see the Doctor as a medieval jester faced with an ultimatum Terry Nation missed out on: tell a good joke or get beheaded. Approach this set of films as you would a cuppa after a hard day's work: soothing, restorative, but with a pleasantly dark colour and unique aroma.

Extras: None, except for a fittingly nostalgia-infused booklet, with an excerpt from Powell himself. **JK.**

HANGAR 18 (1980) Blu-ray and DVD. Out Now. Olive Films. Certificate: N/A.

The Utah-based Sunn Classic Pictures, a company that made an absolute fortune out of awful big-screen documentaries like *In Search Of Noah's Ark* and *In Search Of Historic Jesus,* came unstuck when they produced this straight-forward, dramatic science-fiction film based around the perceived US government cover-up of UFOs.

Kolchak himself, Darren McGavin, stars as the leader of a group of scientists studying a flying saucer being kept hidden in an aircraft hangar by the US Government. Channelling his *Bullitt* role, former *Man From U.N.C.L.E.* Robert Vaughn is a slimy politico who wants to keep the lid on the discovery at all costs. The opening scenes feature astronauts Gary Collins and James Hampton witnessing the gruesome death of one of their number in a space explosion caused by the proximity of a UFO, which lands later in the desert and is spirited away by the US military. There's quite an effective effects shot showing the dead astronaut floating around with his head gruesomely detached from his body.

The frustrating thing about the

DARREN McGAVIN ROBERT VAUGHN GARY COLLINS JOSEPH CAMPANELLA
JAMES HAMPTON TOM HALLICK PAMELA BELLWOOD
HANGAR 18
SCREENPLAY BY STEVEN THORNLEY STORY BY TOM CHAPMAN & JAMES L. CONWAY
DIRECTED BY JAMES L. CONWAY

narrative is that it's unlikely the government would have decided not to bring Colllins and Hampton in on the cover-up, since they witnessed the UFO incident with their own eyes. This causes them to investigate further in an attempt to clear their name of being responsible for the space explosion and leads to a *Capricorn One*-style scenario where government agents in sun glasses and black suits go to increasingly unbelievable lengths to put a lid on the situation.

Sort of based on the 1947 Roswell Incident, this one falls down in the special effects department - Ed Wood had better saucers in *Plan Nine From Outer Space*! It's more like a TV movie than a cinema feature and apart from Vaughn and McGavin the performances are fairly unconvincing. Cheesy would be the best way to describe the entire enterprise and the only decent element is a surprisingly good score by *Kojak* and *Horror Express* composer John Cacavas. The picture quality (1.78:1) is very good apart from a few weird little interference glitches. There are no extras. **AB.**

THE HOWLING (1981) Blu-ray and DVD Out Now. Shout! Factory www.movietyme Certificate: N/A.
Though Joe Dante's enjoyable werewolf flick wasn't as popular as the same year's *American Werewolf In London* (which had much better transformation effects), *The Howling* is a hip, often scary revitalisation of a tired genre staple and has built itself quite a cult following over the years.

Dee Wallace turns in a solid performance here as a TV reporter who has a terrifying encounter in a porno shop with psycho Robert Picardo. Recovering from her ordeal she decides on a stay at a country retreat run by ex-*Avengers* star Patrick Macnee. Bad move. The place turns out to be a werewolf sanctuary, and poor old Dee's telly career is down the tubes when she turns into what looks like a Yorkshire Terrier on air!

The script (by John Sayles and Terence Winkless) is a good mixture of chills and chuckles, and certainly a vast improvement on its source material - a pulp paperback by Gary Brandner. If the picture has a problem, it's that it uses up its best Rob Bottin effects early on, leaving Dante nothing much to surprise the audience with in the final reels.

It's good fun though, with lots of in-jokes aimed to please genre fans. Characters are named after directors of past werewolf movies and there are stacks of old film clips and cameos by Roger Corman, Forrest J. Ackerman etc. Dante favourite Dick Miller is the owner of an occult bookshop who says: "The Manson people used to hang around here and shoplift!"

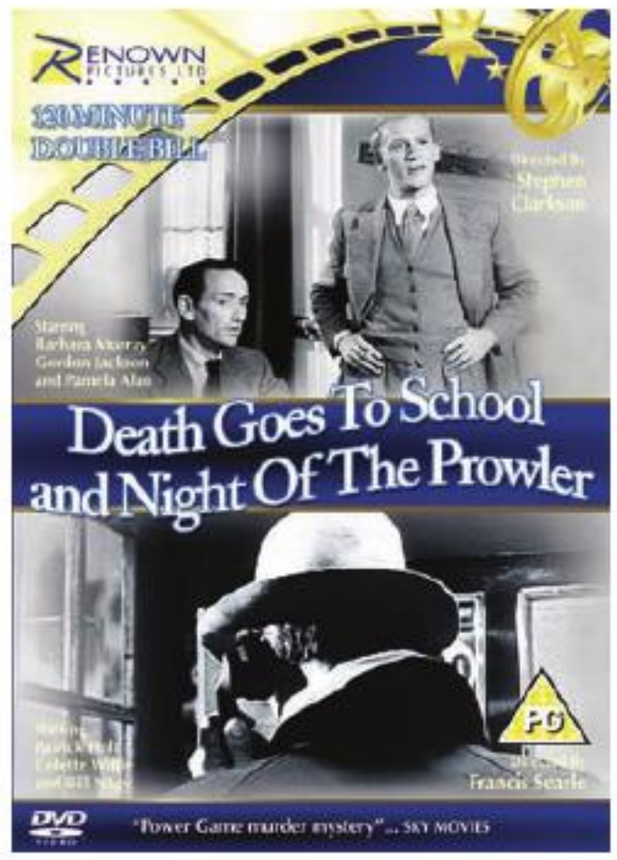
The Howling is presented here in the same 1080p transfer in 1.86:1 that StudioCanal put out in Europe a while back. While there is evidence of some digital 'enhancement' it still looks very nice. The audio has been bumped up to 5.1, which benefits Pino Donnagio's atmospheric score more than it does the dialogue.

Extras: Lots! There are two audio commentaries, the first an enjoyable if rather rambling and jokey group chat from Joe Dante and actors Dee Wallace, Christopher Stone and Robert Picardo. Stone (who married Dee Wallace in 1980) sadly died in 1995 at the age of just 53, so this is obviously an old recording.

The second audio commentary is a brand new one from author Gary Brandner, but he prefers to chat more about his writing career and other books than *The Howling* itself.

On to the featurettes, which are all in HD. *Howlings Eternal* offers up a chat with executive producer Steven A. Lane, a former cinema owner. *Cut to Shreds* has editor Mark Goldblatt talking about the best ways to scare the viewer with crafty cutting. Then in another featurette co-writer Terrence Winkless gives some details on his approach to the project, and in *Horror's Hallowed Ground* we get to tour some of the film's locations with the amusing Sean Clark. *Making a Monster Movie: Inside The Howling* is a vintage behind-the-scenes short, and we also get an interview with renowned stop motion animator David Allen. *Unleashing the Beast - The Making of The Howling* clocks in at around 50 minutes and is the best extra of all, with lots of fascinating facts about the film and the history of werewolves in movies. Deleted scenes, outtakes, a trailer and photo gallery complete a howlingly good package. **AB.**

DEATH GOES TO SCHOOL (1953)/NIGHT OF THE PROWLER (1962). DVD. Out Now. Renown. Certificate: PG.
Here's another interesting double bill of vintage British crime thrillers from Renown, who are still plundering their considerable back catalogue of Butchers' B-movies on an almost monthly basis.



Death Goes To School was shot at the tiny Merton Park studios in South London and is set entirely within the confines of a girls' school, where an unpopular female teacher has been found strangled to death with a headscarf.

All of the murder suspects are female, and the only clue is the killer wore size 5 shoes. It's up to men with much bigger plates - dour Scottish Detective Inspector Gordon Jackson and his perpetually bemused assistant Sam Kydd - to solve the crime without the aid of forensics. Since Jackson lights a fag and drops his match at the crime scene, we assume that CSI is out of the question.

In these bygone days the cops took a less scientific, more genteel approach, and here the police investigation consists of sending the bit part woodentops off for a quick poke round the grounds while the senior detectives quiz the staff in an extremely polite manner over endless cups of tea, sometimes with biscuits. Custard Creams, too. Jackson later adopted a more bullish approach to interrogation when playing grouchy George Cowley in *The Professionals*.

Attractive Barbara Murray at first heads the suspect list as the posh teacher whose scarf was found round the victim's neck. But the way she drinks her tea with her little finger inclined is an obvious sign she's too classy to muddy her hands with murder. Determined to get to the bottom of things, Murray plays amateur detective and solves the crime before the police do, leading to a low key but satisfying finale.

The film is no great shakes as a murder mystery since it's obvious from the very start who the killer is, but Jackson and Kydd work well together and the slightly acerbic banter between the two of them is far and away the most entertaining aspect of a movie that is best seen with tea and biscuits on a rainy Sunday afternoon.

Night of the Prowler sounds like it might offer up some sinister goings-on, but no such luck. This 1962 effort was shot at Shepperton in Surrey but has the feel of one of the more routine *Edgar Wallace Mysteries* that were filmed in Merton Park, right down to the overdone jazz score. Directed by Hammer veteran Francis Searle, it went round cinemas in 1963 as a support feature to Frank Sinatra's *Come Blow Your Horn*.

When one of the executives of a racing car design company is shot dead by a mystery prowler, the other partners in the business start fearing for their own lives too. The prime suspect is a vengeful former employee sent to prison for stealing company funds, but unflappable Detective Inspector John Horsley is not so sure that the real killer isn't one of the other directors, hoping to increase his share of the company profits. Talk is cheap and there's way too much of it here. What little action there is to be found unfolds in tiny night clubs and offices amid a smog of cigarette smoke, with the attractive young females in the cast clinging to the arms of lovers and husbands who look more like their fathers. Craggy Hungarian-born character actor Bill Nagy is the closest thing here to a good-looking male lead, and he's not that close. Female lead Colette Wild was in *Day of The Triffids* as a nurse, and she's the woman who's scarred by Anton Diffring's botched plastic surgery in the opening scenes of *Circus of Horrors*.

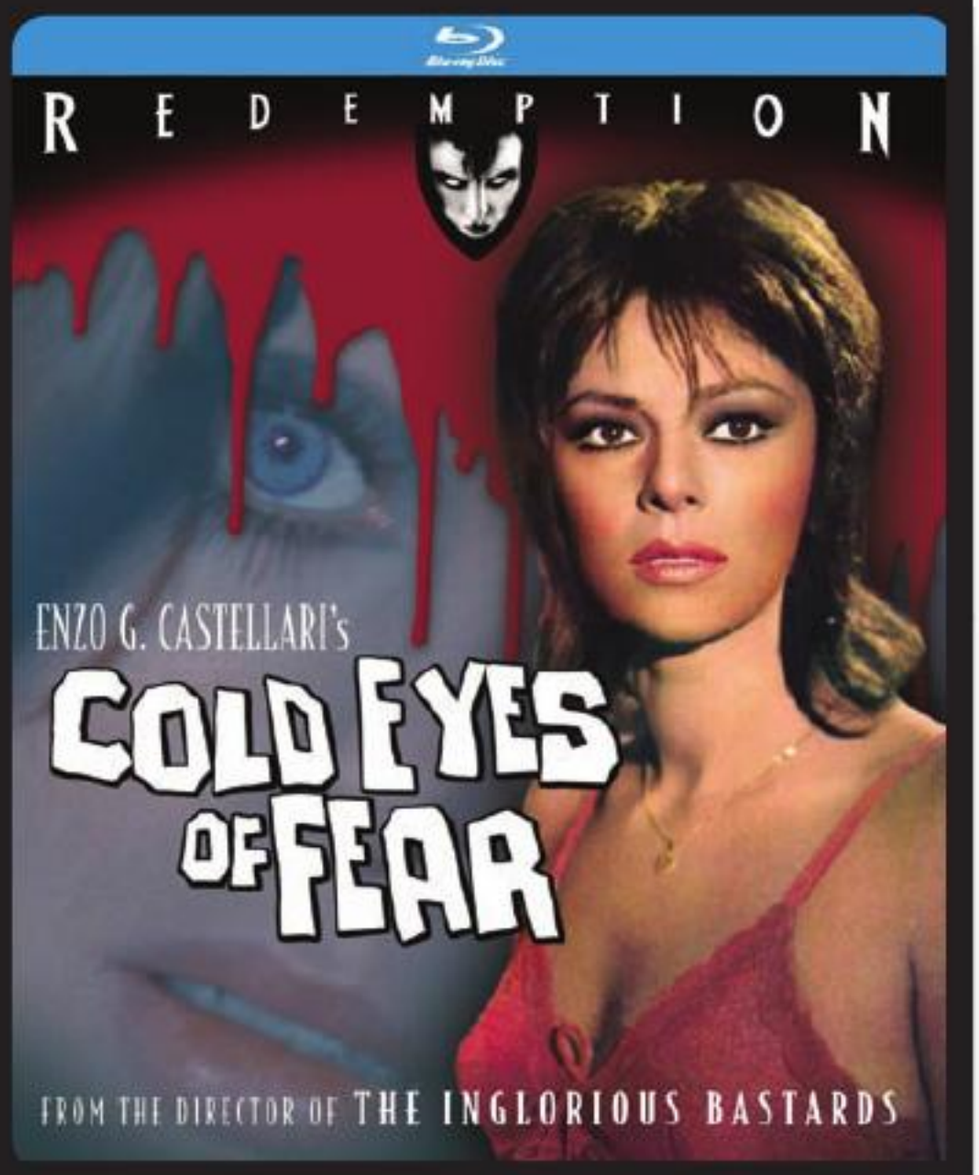
As with it's co-feature, you can spot the murderer straight away because his eyes are too close together. But if you're a fan of *The Edgar Wallace Mysteries* who's nostalgic for the old days when everyone spoke frightfully good BBC English and criminals came quietly with a shrug of "It's a fair cop, guv," then you'll find this a pleasant enough trip down memory lane. The print quality on both films (fullscreen) is good. **AB.**

THE COLD EYES OF FEAR (1971)
Blu-ray and DVD.
Out Now. Kino Lorber. Redemption/ www.movietyme. com.
Certificate: N/A.

We once gave this film away as a freebie cover-mount on my other magazine *DVD World,* but it didn't look as good as it does here in a great new HD release brought about by my old pal Nigel Wingrove's Stateside association with Kino Lorber. The setting is London when it still swung, and the opening scene involves the delectable Karin Schubert in kinky sex with a sado masochistic slant on stage in a London night club. That'll do for me, Vicar.

Young lawyer Peter (Gianni Garko) picks up sexy Italian hooker Anna (Giovanna Ralli) and takes her back to the swanky home of his uncle, a respected judge played by Fernando Rey of *The French Connection* fame. Uncle is working late at the office, and Peter's hoping for a large whiskey and sofa. But his fun is soon interrupted by the arrival of two thugs: Quill (Julian Mateos) and Arthur (Frank Wolff), sweaty individuals with dual motives of robbery and revenge. Then begins a cat and mouse game between the crooks and their hostages as they all wait for the judge to return home.

It's a fairly straightforward plot enlivened by a handful of violent scenes and a screechingly atonal jazz score by Ennio Morricone. Though there are some nostalgic views of 1970s Soho, with local smut cinemas showing the likes of Pete Walker's *Cool It Carol,* this was mostly lensed at Cinecittà Studios in Rome. The rather dodgy dubbing doesn't help, and director Enzo G. Castellari (*Inglorious Bastards*) gets a bit zoom-happy at times. But he stages the action scenes well, and if you're a fan of early 70s gialli you will probably find this quite an enjoyable effort despite its somewhat poorly developed plotline. It looks very good indeed in a 1.85:1 hi-def transfer. The only extras are a bunch of trailers. **AB.**



THE FOG (1980) Blu-ray.
Out Now.
Scream Factory/www.movietyme.com
Certificate: N/A.

When John Carpenter's *The Fog* first drifted our way, most British viewers were disappointed about two things. Firstly, it wasn't the adaptation of James Herbert's novel we'd all been hoping for, and secondly it wasn't a patch on the director's earlier horror hit, *Halloween*.

That hasn't prevented the film gaining a cult reputation over the years, but I still find it a bit of a disappointment, mainly because it's all a bit too obvious and predictable. I'll concede there's still a lot to admire about it though. Dean Cundey's brilliant Panavision camerawork gives it an expensive look, and it boasts one of Carpenter's most haunting and hummable scores.

After an onscreen quote from Edgar Allan Poe, the refined tones of that superb actor John Houseman set the scene as he recounts a late night campfire ghost story to an enraptured group of children on a beach. I love this opening, even though the 'five minute' ghost story only lasts half that time. Ironically, this highly effective sequence was shot after the movie was edited, to pad the running time out a bit. As I'm sure you all know by now, the movie is set in a picturesque coastal community which is enveloped in a thick fog. Inside the fog are the spirits of shipwrecked sailors out for revenge on the ancestors of the townspeople who caused their death in a shipwreck 100 years earlier. The story gives us two well-rounded female protagonists, who never get to meet. Jamie Lee Curtis is the tomboyish hitchhiker who faces the perils of *The Fog* alongside rugged trucker Tom Atkins. Adrienne Barbeau (who became John Carpenter's wife) has the juicier role of feisty local DJ Stevie Wayne, who broadcasts to night owls from a remote lighthouse and therefore gets a bird's eye view of the ghostly goings-on. The tense final scenes see her being chased around the place by the worm-faced spectres.

As usual with Carpenter there are plenty of in-jokes for movie buffs, with Darwin Joston (of *Assault On Precinct 13*) playing a coroner called Dr. Phibes, and a mention of Bodega Bay, where Hitchcock's *The Birds* was famously set. Stevie Wayne's final warning to viewers: "look for the fog" is an obvious reference to *The Thing*'s "Keep watching the skies."

Carpenter himself can be seen in a cameo, and of course Jamie Lee's mum, Janet Leigh (star of *Psycho*) also appears. Interestingly, Christopher Lee was supposed to play the key role of troubled Father Malone but had to bow out for scheduling reasons, allowing Hollywood veteran Hal Holbrook to take the part.

Inspired by a visit to Stonehenge, Carpenter decided to go for scares here, rather than blood and gore. But initial reactions to a first cut of his movie were not good and so he went back and added extra shocks in reshoots, including a final scene cheat that should never have been included. According to the ghostly legend, the spooks want six victims, and after killing a trio of sailors early on that leaves them just three more to find in the entire movie. It appears at the end, however, that the ghosts just can't count!

Scream Factory's Blu-ray Collector's Edition has really done fans of the movie proud. Cinematographer Dean Cundey supervised this new high definition 2.35:1 transfer and the results are impressive, though some of the optical effects scenes do betray the cheapness of the film's budget. The movie's soundtrack has been remastered in 5.1 but fairly tastefully so and it doesn't feel overly manipulated.

Extras: A previously available audio commentary with Carpenter and writer/ producer Debra Hill with lots of interesting anecdotes. A new commentary with Adrienne Barbeau, Tom Atkins and Production Designer Tommy Lee Wallace, which is not as informative but still a lot of fun. *My Time with Terror* is a lively on-camera HD interview with Jamie Lee Curtis, who still looks great, is a wonderful conversationalist, and covers a lot of ground. *Dean of Darkness* is an interview with cameraman Dean Cundey talking about his career and his work on *The Fog. Fear on Film: Inside The Fog* is a rather scrappy looking vintage featurette but interesting nevertheless, and *Tales from the Mist: Inside The Fog* has Adrienne Barbeau reminiscing about the movie. We also get photo galleries and a look at the film's storyboards, a visit to some of its locations and some outtakes, alongside special effects tests, trailers and TV spots. There's also apparently a hidden Easter Egg. Where is it? I haven't the foggiest... Oh, and this is Region A coded, so you'll need a US player. **AB.**

KINO CLASSICS
INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FILMS, INC.
FIVE DOLLS FOR AN AUGUST MOON
"One of the most beautiful and innovative films [Bava] made."
— Tim Lucas, author of Mario Bava: All the Colors of the Dark
THE MARIO BAVA COLLECTION

FIVE DOLLS FOR AN AUGUST MOON (1970) Blu-ray and DVD. Out 7th September. Kino/Redemption/www.movietyme.com. Certificate: N/A.

Agatha Christie's much-filmed *Ten Little*, er, *Indians*, gets another turn in front of the cameras in this colourful effort from cult Italian director Mario Bava.

Several industrialists are interested in buying Professor William Berger's formula for synthetic resin ("His best formula yet"), and they conduct negotiations in the sober manner you might expect. That's right, Vicar, they invite him to a swinging party on a secluded island, the centrepiece of which is buxom Edwige Fenech dancing on tables while seductively decked out in voluminous lemon loon pants and little else.

For an encore, she's lashed to a decorative tree stump (didn't every swish pad of the 70s have one?) and subjected to a mock execution. Well that would probably persuade you or I to sell the formula and chuck in our granny too, especially as the offered price is a cool million dollars, but the Prof is made of sterner stuff - he's determined to donate his work to the scientific community, free of charge.

As these guys go through the motions of industrial espionage, their foxy wives are intriguing behind their backs, engaging in lesbian trysts and servicing the servants ("We have to do something for the lower classes").

"I can't help feeling there's a murderer on the island" one of the women brilliantly deduces after one such lower class Romeo is found stabbed to death on the beach. Needless to say he's only the first of many victims, but as all the murders take place offscreen there's little opportunity for Bava to showcase his renowned stylish and bloodthirsty way with a kill scene.

Faced with the handicap of such a pedestrian, blood-restricting script, the Italian horror maestro keeps boredom at bay by playing up the soapy melodrama of the proceedings, distracting himself from the humdrum mechanics of *5 Dolls*' rudimentary plot with outrageous visual excess (e.g. outbreaks of throbbing zoom shots every five minutes).

There are moments of dazzling cinematic flair - notably when Bava's camera chases giant marbles cascading down a staircase (obviously an influence on a similar shot in Dario Argento's *Suspiria*), following them into a sunken bath where a dead woman lies - and a neat running joke in which each fresh corpse is hung up, neatly shrink-wrapped, in the freezer (just so the fab late-60s decor doesn't get too cluttered).

As an added bonus, the film's lurid production design is perfectly complemented by the soundtrack, swelling Hammond organ, twanging sitar and thundering congas - offering guaranteed satisfaction for all fans of trash, camp and kitsch. The film looks remarkably good in HD, with eye-popping colours and a richly textured image. No extras on our review disc. **AB.**

TOWER OF EVIL (1972) Blu-ray. Out Now. Shout! Factory/www.movietyme.com Certificate: N/A.

I'm really delighted to see this sleazy 70s British shocker arrive on Blu-ray, because it has been a guilty pleasure of mine for many years. Anything with the lovely Jill Haworth in always gets my hormonal vote because she looked so hot back then in films like this, as well as *It!* and *The Haunted House of Horror.*

Tower of Evil made quite an impact on me at the time because it was so much sexier and gorier than the films that were being produced by the likes of Hammer and Amicus. It may seem hard to believe, but naked females and severed heads rolling down stairs were not a familiar sight down my local Odeon.

We've all seen the script before, but it's still good gory fun all the way, kicking off with some splattery murders in a fogbound lighthouse. One of the victims is *Confessions Of A Window Cleaner* star Robin Askwith, who loses his clothes and then his life just about quickly enough for us to forgive him his diabolical American accent.

Later on, a group of generally quite randy and trendily dressed archaeologists go to investigate some artefacts found at the site and are picked off one by one by a hairy monster who lives under the lighthouse.

Tower of Evil was produced by American-born Richard (*Devil Doll*) Gordon, and it's both cliched and entertaining. The script has many unintentional laughs and the production is thoroughly studio-bound, but the sets are great so we have no complaints there. It's always enjoyable to see a good cast doing its best with really dodgy material, and the likes of Dennis Price, Bryant (*The Projected Man*) Haliday, Anthony Valentine, Jack Watson, Derek Fowlds, Mark Edwards and Anna Palk deliver some laughable lines with commendably straight faces.

The only actor who lets the side down is Gary Hamilton as Brom. He may be a good looking guy but he speaks his lines in a dull monotone and puts no life into his performance whatsoever. Not surprisingly this remains his only screen role.

The movie was really well shot and it looks splendid in a top notch 1.78:1 transfer. The colours really pop out of the screen in the scene where psychiatrist Anthony Valentine interrogates the massacre survivor using a cut-price batch of disco lights. The high definition image doesn't do some of the back projected effects any favours, particularly when our characters are heading to the island by boat, but it's difficult to imagine a better-looking version than this.

Extras: Slimmed down and looking good, film historian David Del Valle, an old friend of this magazine, delivers a terrific stream-of-consciousness chat on camera about the film to horror hostess Katarina Leigh Waters.

David notes that the late Richard Gordon really pushed the boat out here - and more than just to Snape Island - by including as much male nudity as there was female. Richard was gay and cast male actors like Gary Hamilton and John Hamill because he liked their looks. David also points out the script's references to the ancient God Baal, and reminds us that a statue of Baal was bought by Christopher Lee and stolen by Peter Cushing in the Amicus movie, *The Skull.* I'd also tend to agree with David's claim that *Tower of Evil* is the world's first teen slasher movie, an honour that is usually ascribed to *Black Christmas* (1974). **AB.**

FIRE MAIDENS OF OUTER SPACE (1956) Blu-ray.
Out Now. Olive Films. Certificate: N/A.

If you thought *Cat Women Of The Moon* was bad, wait until you get a load of the British version of the same plot, which if possible looks like it cost about half as much to produce!

Anthony Dexter (a minor player who found brief fame playing Valentino) stars as a space captain who leads a modest space expedition to one of the moons of Jupiter, a place that looks remarkably like the Surrey woods they took off from.

The added advantage, however, is that the new location is inhabited by a race... well, half a dozen or so... of foxy space babes. They are descendants of the civilisation of Atlantis and dress rather sexily in skimpy bathing suits with matching mini-skirts. One of the crew is basically offered a free bonk from one of these hotties by the old geezer who seems to be acting as their extra terrestrial pimp. "But I'm a happily married man with two kids," he says. Oh yes, they had morals back then.

For added excitement there's a funny-looking monster roaming around, who pops up occasionally to inject more unintentional humour, and carry off the gals for an unspecified purpose. The creature is just a guy with a black-faced joke shop mask on. The monster can shrug off bullets, but gas grenades get right up his nose. But where's the giant spider in a cave that we always expect in these situations?

Much inappropriate use is made of Borodin's classical standard, "Stranger In Paradise." At one point the Fire Maidens do a dance to this that looks like it was choreographed by Stevie Wonder. The biggest laughs, however, come from seeing English actors like Harry Fowler and Sidney Tafler trying to put on American accents. And what do you think is the first thing the astronauts do when they arrive on the planet? Yes, they light up a fag!

It's great to see this getting a Blu-ray release, even if it's not actually in colour as is erroneously stated on the back of the BD sleeve. The monochrome image quality is generally very good, but Olive have used a slightly scratchy print and so the scratches are in HD too. The bare bones release doesn't even include a trailer, but that won't put you off if you're a fan of this sort of thing. Wait a minute... what's that sound? Oh, it's old Borodin, spinning in his grave. **AB.**

BLOOD BEAST TERROR (1968) DVD/BLU-RAY
Out Now. Odeon. Certificate: 12

"They'll never believe this at the Yard."

Understatement was not something usually synonymous with Tigon. From demonically-possessed women's hands mutating to murderous talons (*Blood On Satan's Claw*) to a skeleton skinning-up into a monstrous beast upon exposure to water (*The Creeping Flesh*), Tony Tenser similarly produced period Gothic like rivals Hammer, but distinguished his projects with the decidedly outré. So what ghastly fancy will beg the scepticism of Her Majesty's constabulary when explaining the *Blood Beast Terror*?

To be demure, a murderous entomological phenomenon. Corpses are turning up on a desolate heath with alarming frequency, all male, crushed to death by collapsed chests and drained of blood. Rumour has it that the place is being terrorised by a flying creature, and it is up to Inspector Quennell (Peter Cushing) to bring the actor's rigour to bear rational explanation to the case. But as the evidence mounts, of lepidopterous scales found at each crime scene and sightings of something humanoid with a bug's head and wings, it becomes clear that pistols best be loaded with moth balls to counter this beast.

To be plain, a woman who transforms into a giant, psycho Death's Head in heat is ravaging the countryside. Told you it wouldn't wash.

Director Vernon Sewell endows the production with a lightness of touch and macabre sense of humour. An am-dram-ham production of Mary Shelley's classic performed in the afflicted town sets itself as a sardonic parallel not only to the film's narrative, but its tone. With its questionable Doctor Manninger (Robert Flemyng, twitchingly indiscriminate), monster in need of companionship, and re-animation effected through a combination of "galvanic stimulation" and fresh blood, this is a wonderfully moth-eaten Frankenstein.

Cushing brings a breezy felicity to the battiness of the affair, especially when it comes time to vanquish the oversized pest, but Roy Hudd steals the show as a ghoulish morgue attendant, keeping his beer chilled between the feet of his clients and excitedly tucking into his dinner: "I got a pie tonight. Makes a change from cold meat."

Blood Beast Terror is by no means a classic of the genre, but is enough of a flight of winged camp that it does have to be seen to be believed. Never mind what they say at the Yard.

Extras: Interview with Wanda Ventham, who speaks with dignified humour about dressing up as a female moth; Enjoyable commentary with authors Jonathan Rigby (*English Gothic*) and David Miller (*The Peter Cushing Companion*) who are humorously disparaging about the sillier aspects of the production. **JK.**

DARK SKIES (2013) DVD/ BLU-RAY Out Now. E-One. Certificate: 15.

We have long been warned about little green men. This film shifts their hue to something more indistinct and everyday: the aliens of *Dark Skies* are known as "the greys". Their presence, like an overcast day influencing one's mood, is a fact of life: "like death and taxes" as an extra-terrestrial investigator quips. Most worryingly, when you become aware of a presence, it is not a beginning but the beginning of an end. One that will most likely result in the abduction of a loved one.

Meet the Barretts. A family living beyond their means, Daniel (Josh Hamilton) unemployed with a mortgage that won't go away, Lacy (Keri Russell, The Americans) an estate agent with a conscience. Jesse, their eldest, is undergoing teenage alienation: Sammy is young and impressionable. A vulnerable unit.

It begins with mysterious night-time fridge raids. Then discoveries of groceries stacked in gravity-defying suspension. Crawling rashes behind the ear. Sudden lapses into autistic trance. For those more shock-oriented, three separate flocks of birds kamikaze into the Barrett house leaving bloodied pock-marks of inexplicable attack. And, since all this phenomena has started, Sammy has had nocturnal visits from the 'Sandman', who would appear to want to give them anything but a dream...

Produced by Jason Blum and Brian Kavanaugh-Jones of *Paranormal Activity* and *Insidious* fame, this is a mildly diverting, fidgety alien intrigue movie, set against the backdrop of Independence Day for over-emphatic pedigree. Its build-up is patiently disconcerting with occasional jolts but the whole never quite takes to the skies: the greys are too much of an inconspicuous presence as befitting their colour, and writer/director Scott Stewart (*Legion*) leaves little room for doubt to energise the conspiracy debate [other than the question of where Daniel, on the verge of bankruptcy, managed to find the money to rig his house with a full digital CCTV rig to do a spot of martian hunting].

This lack of ambiguity is frustrating as *Dark Skies* is at its best in exploring a family close to breakdown. Daniel lies to his wife about failing to get a new job and Lacy neglects to tell him that their youngest is having vivid nightmares: self-deceptions to maintain a veneer of apple-pie normalcy. As tensions mount, both boys develop bruises and welts on their bodies and the climax retreats into a child's anxious fantasy, admittedly violent, of marital collapse. But, in side-stepping any difficult questions, it is made clear that any problem besieging the Barretts has been engineered by external forces.

Blame it on the greys. The little green ones seem quite innocent by comparison.

Extras: Commentary with Stewart, Blum, Kavanaugh-Jones and editor Peter Gvozdas, which exists to stoke the ego of the producers de nos jours; Alternate and Deleted Scenes, the usual uninteresting filler. **JK.**

SATAN'S SLAVE/PREY (1976/1978) DVD Out Now. Odeon. Certificate: 18

Watching this Norman J. Warren double-bill back to back, one could be forgiven for thinking that the initial stands for 'Jamboree', such is the uproarious, wanton debauchery on display. Along with Pete Walker, Warren brought lurid sleaze back into British horror cinema in the same way that Hammer had once surfed its own new wave of grisly, risqué reinvention: ironically, it was that studio's settling down into more formulaic, politely gory period retreads that fired the need for grue-soaked excess in films like *Frightmare* (1974) and *Satan's Slave*.

Initially a humble variation on the necromantic nepotism genre, Warren's protagonist is the unwitting Catherine (Candace Glendenning from *The Flesh & Blood Show*), both in manner and ancestral awareness, who sets off to the country with her parents to see Uncle Alexander (Michael Gough). Upon arrival, her father has a funny turn and crashes the car into a nearby tree: she is pulled to safety before an exploding petrol tank rashly renders her an orphan. Tended to by the seemingly hospitable Alexander and his pasty-faced son Stephen (Martin Potter), who has already been introduced not only dressed as a ventriloquist's dummy but by stabbing a woman who spurned his advances, Catherine begins to have visions of naked women being tied to trees, then branded and whipped. What her clairvoyancy neglects to intuit is that she is related to a powerful high priestess who can only be resurrected by the blood of a direct descendant on the anniversary of her birth date: who doesn't like a birthday surprise?

Whipped up amidst all this is the aforementioned high quotient of exploitative exuberance: snakes writhing over nipples, pre-sacrifice oral sex and cruciform sex-aids provide a novel virgin-on-the-altar experience; an intestinal gouging is gore-spurtingly over-the-top, blood writhing over the nipples of the unfortunate victim. Add to this Gough's sinister alertness and a teasing uncertainty to the ending, and *Satan's Slave* is a favourably grubby offering to the canon of deranged necromancy.

Following on from this momentum, *Prey* is an even more psychedelic affair, its alien-takeover premise derailed with unhinged lesbianism, transvestism and screaming ab-dabs of neurotic jealousy. It all kicks off when dazed amnesiac Anders (Barry Stokes) stumbles through the grounds of a mansion belonging to Jessica (Glory Annen), which she shares with her covetous lover Josephine (a deliciously catty Sally Faulkner), and they foolishly invite him in. For Anders has been snatched by an extra-terrestrial race looking for fresh meat high in protein and, what the vegetarian couple may lack in that, they more than make up for in their easiness to fall prey to the motives of this beguiling intruder.

Prey is a hysterical chamber piece of confused sexual politics as erratic desire and overwrought anxiety roil through the characters, complemented by scenes of surrealist science-fiction, especially when Anders morphs into a carnivorous feline beast when appetite overwhelms him. Most strikingly, there is an extended sequence after the girls dive in to rescue the stranger from a mire where he was hunting swans: Anders's slow-motion flailing in the tarry slick, gasping for air as both Josephine and Jessica try to rescue him (for themselves?), is not only tantalisingly odd, but a sticky microcosm of the turbulence bubbling under this threesome.

If *Satan's Slave* is a jamboree of genre excess, *Prey* manages to jack-knife something curiously substantial into its cannibalistic delirium. Lurid sleaze is all fine and good, but a bit of depth really adds to Warren's unique flavour.

Extras: Thorough making of for each film, underpinned by Warren's genial authority, and featuring particularly thoughtful contributions from Faulkner and Potter about their characters, plus an archival one for *Satan's Slave;* Valuable commentaries: with director and author Jonathan Rigby for *Prey,* which probes the production's resourcefulness and divulges much anecdotal information; Warren is joined by the marvellously self-deprecatory screenwriter David MacGillivray for *Slave,* which is worth hearing for their dry interplay. *Satan's Slave* also features an interview with composer John Scott, erudite in delineating the deceptive simplicity and construction of his score, and two deleted scenes without sound for completists. *Prey* includes Warren's 1965 short *Fragment,* a poetic account of the despair felt by a woman after being jilted by her lover. A worthy addition to one's collection? J for Justified. **JK.**

SAWNEY: FLESH OF MAN (2012) DVD
Out Now. 101 Films. Certificate: 18.

Sawney Bean is Britain's answer to Ed Gein. Living in caves by day and prowling the highlands by night, he was supposedly the leader of an incestuous clan sometime in 16th Century Scotland. He became notorious for killing and eating over a thousand victims before being caught and executed for his crimes alongside his homicidal family. If Gein inspired the figures of Leatherface and Norman Bates, Bean and co. were transposed to the Nevada desert for Wes Craven's skin-shredding classic *The Hills Have Eyes.* Now that Bean has been recolonised by his native shores, the question remains whether there is need for yet another rapey, inbred cannibal flick that his and Gein's folkloric legacy have perpetuated. The answer, in this rare instance, is an unsettling "aye".

An opening legend states that one member of the clan managed to escape capture. So far, so abysmal Texas Chainsaw remake. In present-day Edinburgh, a girl has been found at a Druidic site called Clootiewell. In smithereens. Young journalist Hamish MacDonald has published an article in the local press criticising the police for not doing enough in the search for missing persons. As thanks, Inspector Munro gives the booze-addled reporter an off-the-record piece of information that will slake his thirst for a scoop: the body parts at the crime scene did not all belong to the victim. And so MacDonald traces the pattern of an ongoing serial killing on the constabulary's behalf, eventually traipsing into the feral den itself where the fun really begins.

As far as grindhouse nastiness goes, *Flesh Of Man* is a prime cut. Sawney's workshop is strewn with pickled heads, brains in porcelain dishes and vacuum-packed bodies swinging from meathooks. He prepares slops of offal for a beast in the cellar known only as Mother, lovingly garnishing the swill with freshly-squeezed sauce from a blood-bag, before using a severed limb to pleasure himself over sexy photographs of tomorrow's lunch: a proper handjob. The atmosphere is so fetid, baneful and downright offensive that it calls to mind Jim Van Bebber's sleaze-sodden short *Roadkill: The Last Days Of John Martin.*

But this is no dour exercise in unwatchable cruelty. *Sawney* is aided in his nefarious exploits not only by a deformed homunculus and two inbred hoodies who practice capoeira just for the hell of it, but with a line in mordant quippery, delivered deliciously by actor David Hayman: when MacDonald calls him a "fucking maniac", the villain sighs, "You can save your profanities and characterisations for your news article."

Alongside the more exploitative elements, director Ricky Wood Jnr. has a keen grasp of uneasy atmosphere: the crag under which the deranged clan reside juts out like canines from the rictus of the landscape, filmed in time-lapse so the morning mists come forth as if sulphurous belches from the depths of hell. And, with the killer's black cab, murky identity and frequent quotation of Scripture, not to mention the seeming powerlessness of the police force, there is more than a hint of Bible John, an unsolved case that has also passed into modern Scottish folklore. As Sawney says, "Bad men do what good men dream." For all its excess, *Flesh Of Man* morbidly taps into our fascination with horrible histories and cautionary legends.

Extras: None on review copy. **JK.**

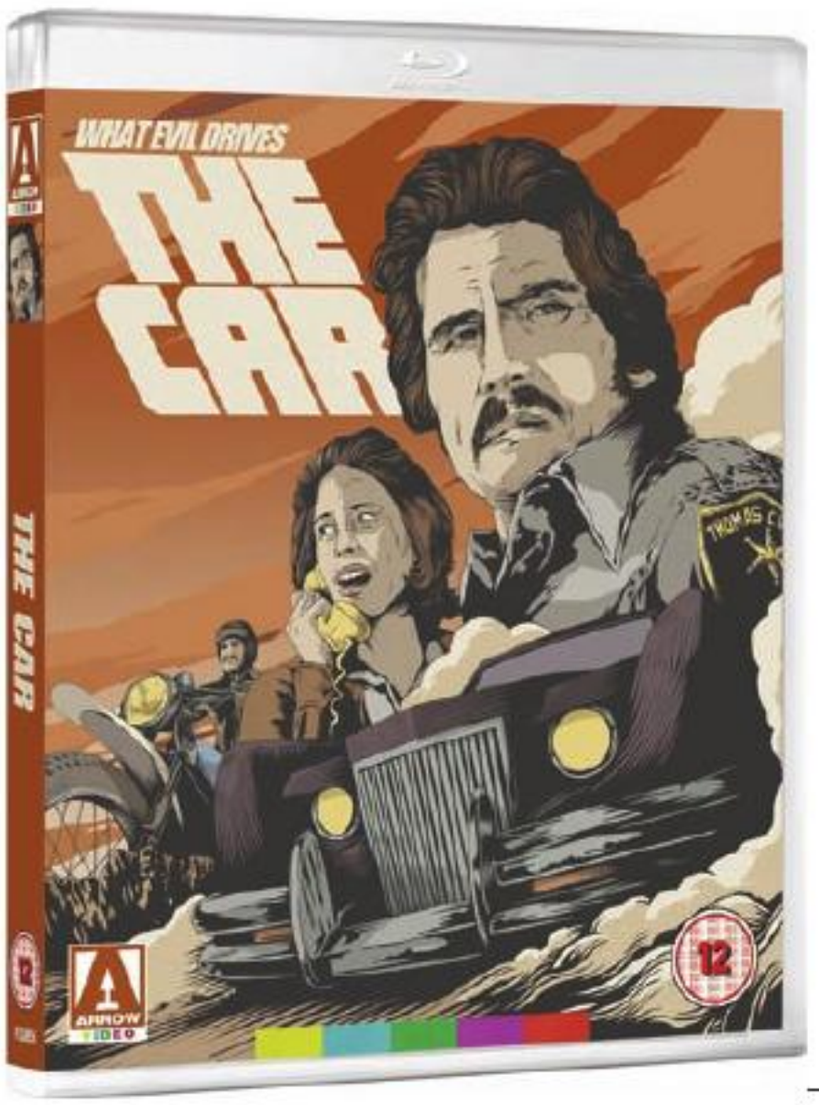
THE CAR (1977) BLU-RAY
Out Now. Arrow Video. Certificate: 12.

Stop. Look. Listen. The car is a deadly instrument, bouquets strapped to posts and trees serving as grim reminder of its destructive potential. And yet mankind is still in love with the automobile, so fetishised in popular imagery. However, when it becomes a diabolic agent of assassination, one cannot help but feel a little underwhelmed, unless it plays out as one long, constantly kinetic chase á la *Duel.* The serial-killing model usually settles to running folk over or pushing them off the road to their doom, as these are the most cinematic means to exert lethal power. Oh, and smashing into things. Beyond that, they can gas an unsuspecting victim if in an unventilated space. Trap limbs in their doors and, should all else fail, honk a horn until tinnitus suffocates the brain. Despite the limitations of the demonic auto movie, *The Car* gives its best shot at vehicular variety.

Suffice to say that said roadster arrives one day to terrorise a small town. It is a sleek sedan with no licence plate or door handles. Most worryingly, no driver. Attacking morally-suspect sinners and innocent children alike, the Car is no modern-day Biblical scourge. With compunction-free gas running through its engine, it is the embodiment of road rage, laying waste to all in its path.

The Car is most convincing as a portrait of a remote community and how its members exercise denial over the weaknesses of their neighbours, often to painfully adverse effect. Deputy Luke (Ronny Cox) has been on the wagon for two years but is clearly lapsing and has been for some time: nevertheless, he is left in a position of responsibility in this moment of crisis, rapidly becoming a rocking, stomach-cramped basket case. And then there is the God-fearing, wife-beating Amos (R. G. Armstrong, effectively reprising his roles from the films of Sam Peckinpah), whose violence has had a blind eye turned to for too long: the inability of the Sheriff (John Marley, most famous as the bedfellow of a horse's head in *The Godfather*) to deal with him inadvertently causes his premature demise.

This unfortunately puts Captain Wade Parent (James Brolin) in charge, a motorbike-riding divorcé and bronzed beefcake, who seems to be perpetually trying to raise one eyebrow: Brolin's inability to act, barely disguised by director Elliot Silverstein shooting him in long-shot with over-dubbed takes when required to 'play tragic', undermines the dependable work put in by the supporting cast, especially Cox's embarrassed self-loathing. No matter, this is a movie about an evil motor and Silverstein does not appear to take himself too seriously. Shot straight on, the car resembles the face of a grumpy Green Man, its headlights like droopy eyes. When it cannot drive into a graveyard (hallowed ground, you see) to slather the citizens with its burning rubber, the clunker drives round in a huff, petulantly kicking up dust. This absurdity reaches a peak once it is revealed what smoulders inside the chassis, courtesy of special effects wizard Albert Whitlock.



Look. Listen. *The Car* may not be as deadly an instrument as it ought, but is, for the most part, an entertaining ride.

Extras: Commentary with the businesslike Silverstein moderated by Calum Waddell, where the director seems loath to talk in much detail about a film he is not overly proud of, mainly due to Universal's insistence that he shoot it in broad daylight. Despite awkward silences, the recording remains genial, although this would have been better as an interview; Interviews with special effects artist William Aldridge (slightly nostalgic, especially when relating the difficulties of desert shoots) and actor John Rubinstein, who humorously describes what it was like being a casualty of the Car. Excerpt from *Trailers From Hell* with John Landis, who chuckles at what a gloriously "dumb" movie this is. Agreed. **JK.**

THE RETURNED (2004) DVD
Out Now. Arrow Films. Certificate: 15.
The first eerie image of *The Returned* is one that exposes a major oversight of popular zombie cinema: a horde of sluggish pensioners move down a boulevard as if in exodus from a giant care home. If the dead were to come back to life, the majority of the returnees would be in their old age. The realisation is initially striking in its sheer obviousness. Likewise, this French drama begins as an original take on the living dead metaphor, but its allegory soon drifts into rather rudimentary territory.

Focusing on the efforts of one suburban town to deal with the inexplicable, national phenomenon of reanimation, *The Returned* is concerned with human response, not as a means to survive falling victim to an epidemic, but from a social and emotional point of view. Housed in community centres, the returnees are treated as refugees, detained not only for scientific observance, but to allow both families and local authorities to prepare best for their reintegration into society and the homestead. Despite an outward appearance of normalcy, the dead all have symptoms of aphasia, what would be expected after concussion, and acute insomnia. Return-to-work schemes are set up to keep the listlessness at bay: a drug, Lithanol, is rushed into production to ease the sleepless nights and the distress this restlessness brings upon the loved ones. But despite these efforts, the disquietude only intensifies, the returnees roaming the streets at night and meeting secretly. Are they formulating some plan against the living? There are certainly potent ideas scratching away at the surface. With the sudden influx of the elderly, how will this affect state provision? Who will pick up the tab? The dead may look and move like their kindred counterparts, but their consciousness is locked in memory: they speak and experience only the language of the past, so how will they contribute to the progression of society? To what extent should they have rights? However, director and co-screenwriter Robin Campillo, leaves too many dilemmas hanging and is not provocative enough in confronting the real core, especially in a country with such colonial history: the returnees are increasingly kept against their will, purely for selfish, sentimental reasons. One of the most interesting notions, that the drug used to suppress the dead's nocturnal activity might be causing an aggressive side effect, thereby catalysing their rebellion, is rapidly swept aside.

Not that there aren't some moments of uncanny reconciliation. The central relationship between a councillor and her returned husband, Mathieu, is touching: their scene of intimacy together after their marriage vows have been preternaturally tested, is tentative and exploratory, as if a first date. And Mathieu's search for the means to apologise to her for why he met his fate in the way that he did is strangely human.

Having recently been adapted for French television, there is much to suggest that the expansiveness of the serial format will allow many of Campillo's conundrums to develop satisfyingly. As its inspiration stands, *The Returned* lacks bite, rather like the undead pensioners at its heart.

Extras: None. **JK.**

MOVIES 4 YOU - SCI FI CLASSICS
Out Sept 3rd. MGM Films/Shout! Factory/www.movietyme.com. Certificate: N/A.
Wow, the old-time genre goodies just keep coming. This 4-movie collection is one of a pair that can be bought for just £12.99 from our friends at Movietyme, easily representing the joint bargain of the month for B-movie buffs, especially since every movie here is presented in a decent transfer.

The Man From Planet X (1951) is a fine example of what can be done on a low budget. This imaginative little sci-fi flick was shot in six days on sets left over from *Joan Of Arc* (1948) and cost a mere $50,000 to make. It features Robert Clarke as a reporter who visits a foggy, studio-bound Scotland to confront a friendly bug-eyed alien in a fishbowl helmet. The alien has come to plead for aid for its freezing planet, but since this is the paranoid 50s he gets blasted by bazookas. Short and sweet, with pacy direction and performances, this is easily one of cult director Edgar G. Ulmer's best efforts.

Ulmer also directed *Beyond The Time Barrier* (1960), a *Twilight Zone*-type tale of a test pilot (Robert Clarke) who goes through a time warp and ends up in the future world of 2024 where mankind has been forced to live underground because of nuclear fallout. The low budget doesn't help ("You will see sights that stagger the imagination!" lied the publicity), and neither does Arthur C. Pierce's juvenile screenplay. The movie was filmed at the old 1936 Centennial Fairgrounds in Texas and at Fort Worth's Carswell Field, a B-52 air base for the sum of $125,000. Writer Pierce also has a brief cameo in the movie playing a mutant.

Angry Red Planet (1959) is one of the low-budget science fiction movies produced by American Sidney Pink in Scandinavia in the late 50s, and it's a pretty tawdry effort that takes place amid sets which look like they were all painted on glass. A group of astronauts blast off for Mars in a cardboard spacecraft and encounter a giant spider-bat and some strange-looking monster plants. Then they get in the ship and come home again. Because Mars is known as the red planet, Pink shot his movie in a process called 'Cinemagic,' which makes everything look negative, but with a reddish glow. It also gives you a headache.

The Time Travellers (1964) is an imaginative low-budgeter that has a group of 1960s boffins accidentally stumbling 107 years into the future through a time portal. There they find that nuclear war has almost destroyed the human race, apart from a small bunch of survivors who live underground and are trying to construct a spaceship to escape to another planet. The efforts of the survivors are being hampered by a race of mutants who want to destroy the last remnants of normal humanity. What the film lacks in budget it makes up for in imagination, with some striking scenes and a highly effective - if downbeat - ending. A bona fide cult classic, with a cameo by *Famous Monsters* editor Forry Ackermann.

The Time Travellers and *The Man From Planet X* are great little movies, the others less so. All are taken from the MGM vaults and look very decent. No extras but what do you expect for the price? **AB.**

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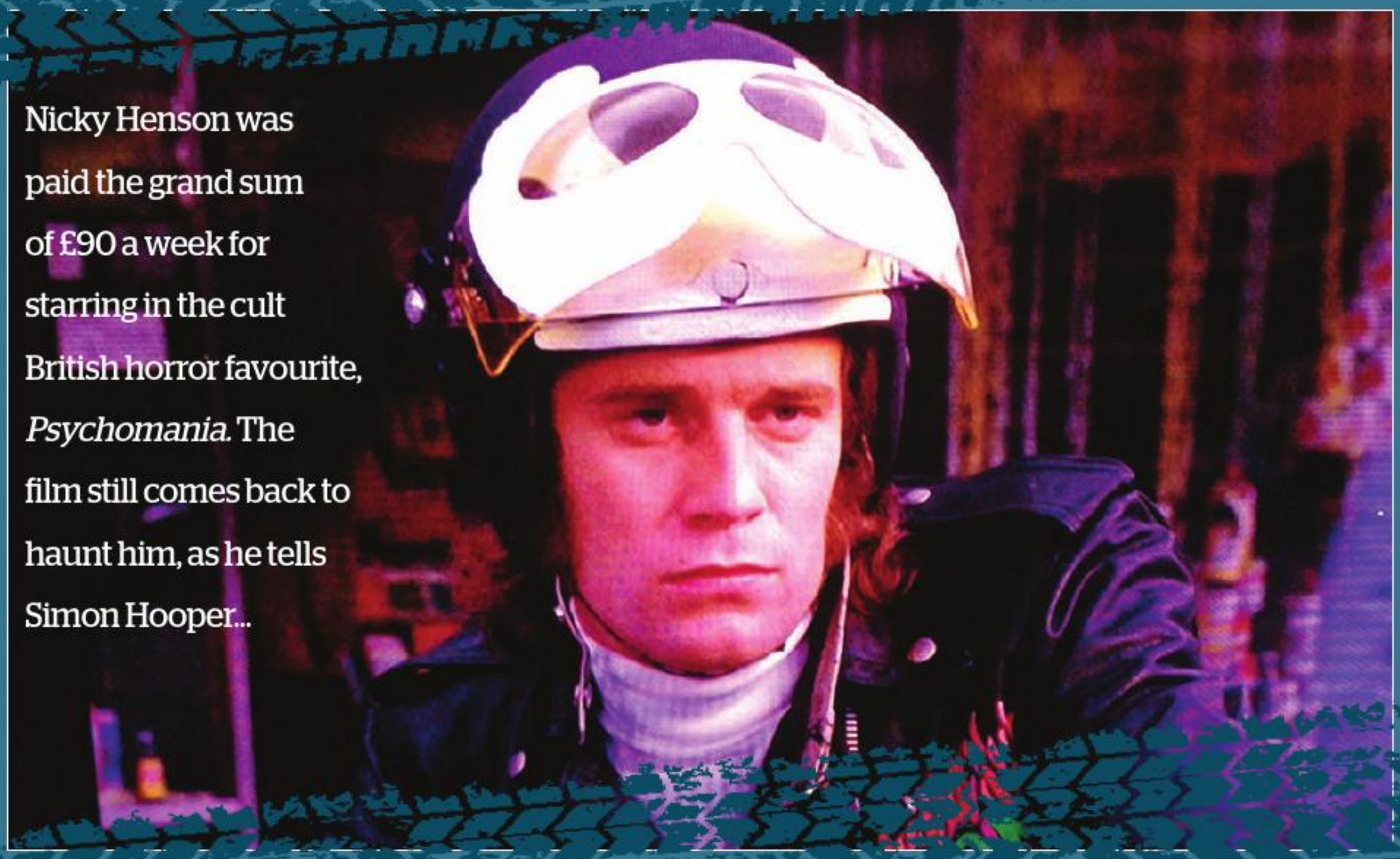
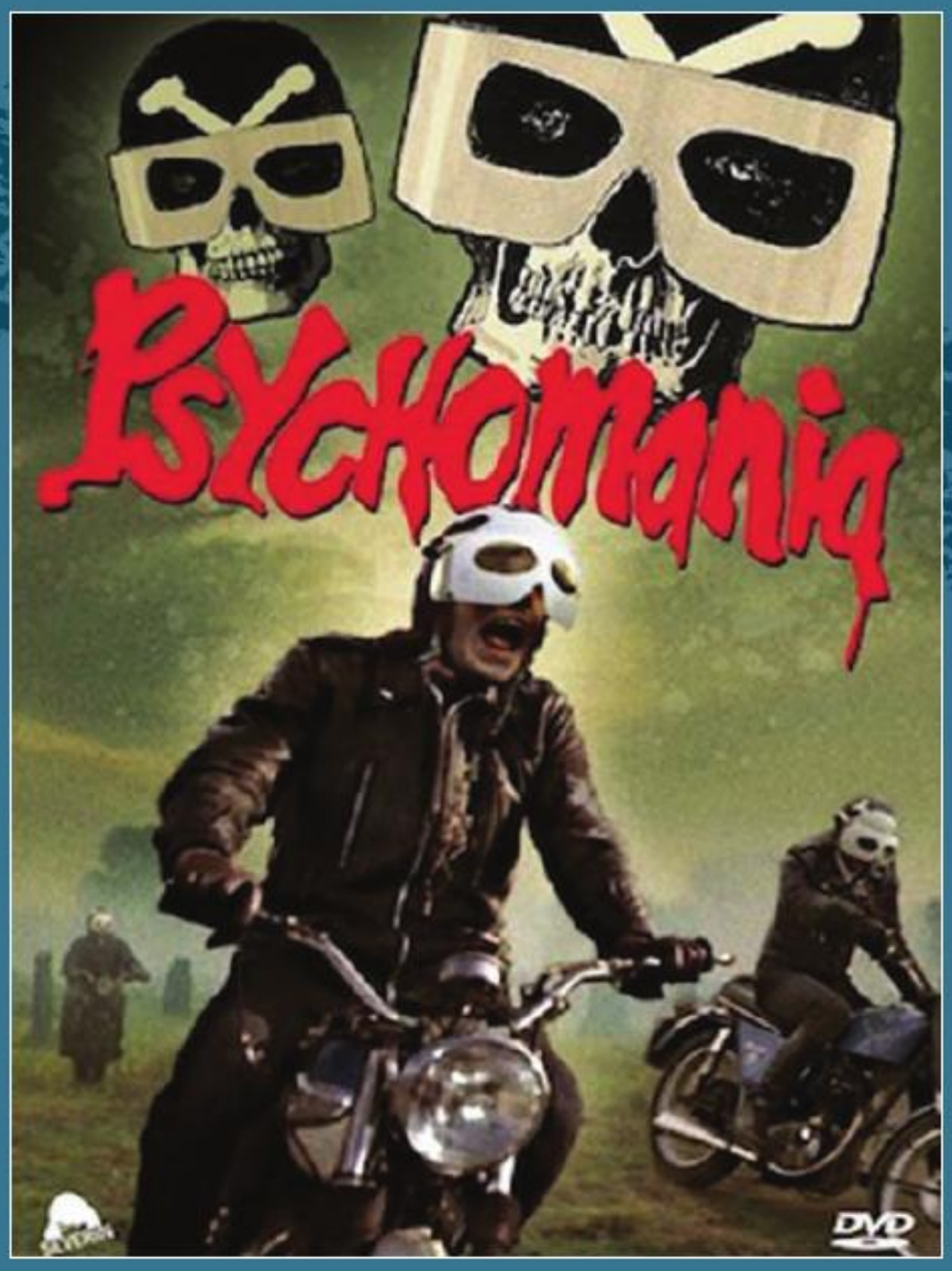


Nicky Henson was paid the grand sum of £90 a week for starring in the cult British horror favourite, *Psychomania*. The film still comes back to haunt him, as he tells Simon Hooper...

PSYCHOMANIAC



For over 50 years Nicky Henson has been on our screens in a wide range of roles, appearing with George Clooney in *Syriana* (2005) or as the smooth ladies' man Mr. Johnson in *Fawlty Towers*. His theatre work is even more extensive, taking in appearances for the Royal National Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company as well as in London's West End picking up an Olivier award nomination along the way.

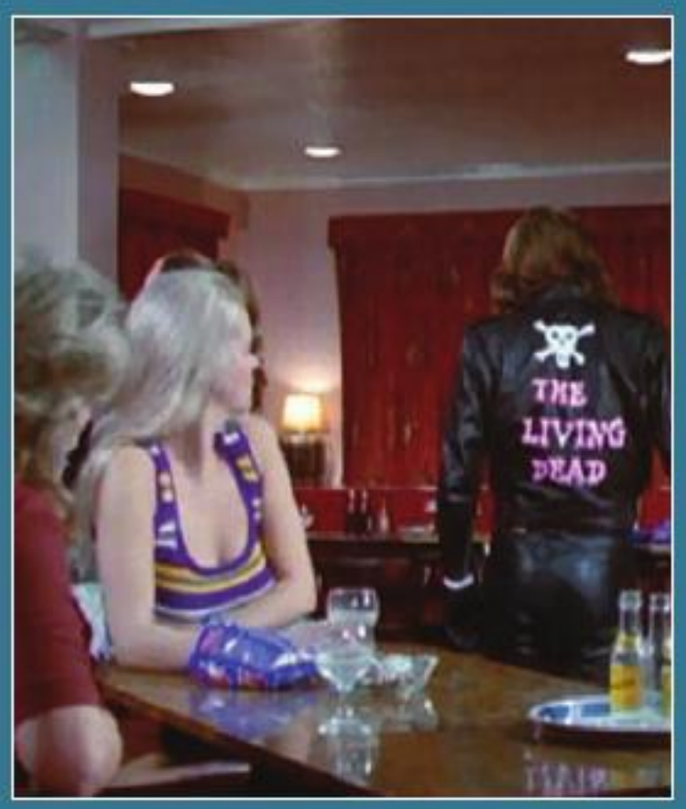
But despite acclaimed turns in *Waiting for Godot, Macbeth, The Cherry Orchard* and many other heavyweight highbrow roles, it's his part as Tom Latham, biker boy zombie back from the dead, terrorising the locals (usually through riding his motorbike on the pavement) in 1973's low budget *Psychomania* that has, much to his bemusement, found him an obsessive fan base over the past 40 years. We spoke to him about the enduring appeal of such top-notch twaddle.

You appeared in *Witchfinder General* and a lot of light comedy too, so was *Psychomania* the culmination of horror and unintentional comedy?

Well, what happened was that the script came through to me at home. I was an avid motorcyclist at the time and I was until I was about 45. The first page of the script said, "A Harley Davidson crests the brow of the hill..." So I rang my agent and said, "Yeah, great, I'll do it." Then I turned up on the set and there were eight old 350 AJS's falling to pieces. I said, "Where are the Harley Davidsons?" They said, "Oh, well, we couldn't afford that." So I was stuck.

How did you end up being sent the script in the first place, was it because they knew you were a biker?

Yes I think that's right. It was kind of the tail end of the B-movies in England. They would be second half of a bill and I was doing a



lot of those. I was a founder member of the Young Vic theatre and we were all on £35 a week, which was quite hard as I had a new young family. Frank Dunlop, who ran it, was my mentor, and he would give me time off rehearsals to go shoot a movie, but I would still be playing at night in the other plays. In those days the union rules were very strict, you had to finish shooting by 5pm or 5.30pm, which gave me, time to get back to the theatre and get on and do the show. I was doing a lot of low budget movies to subsidise my theatre work.

They didn't have to pitch it to you or persuade you?
No, no they rang up my agent and asked if I was free, and my agent said I'd probably do it, so they sent me the script and I said, "Yeah I'll do it because I like the motorcycles."

I presume your agent read it as well?
Oh no, no, no, no. They didn't know anything about it until it came out and I shouldn't think that they even saw it then!

So they didn't try to talk you out of it, then?
No. Because I was a serious theatre actor and in those days I had made a decision to subsidise my theatre career by doing low budget second feature movies rather than television. If you do bad television everybody sees it, but if you do bad movies nobody sees it. Little did I know that so many of the bad movies I did would become cult favourites and come back to bite me.

You've got some ropey dialogue in this. I think my favourite is right at the start, "It's not me you're scared of... it's the world!"
(Laughs) There's a great continuity error too, in the first scene in the kitchen with George Sanders, when suddenly this huge bread roll appears in my hand. My kids love that, and play it back to me a lot.

Did you ever get a chance to remonstrate with the writers about the dialogue?
I sat with the producer one day in Shepperton and I said, "Bloody hell, where did you get this script?" He told me, "Well I have got a desk full of scripts and I went to the money men and said I've got a script here: 'Zombie bikers return from the grave,' and they just flung the money at me." I later found out that he wrote the script himself.

Was it always called *Psychomania?*
No it was called *Vampira,* then they realised there was a magazine called that... oh no, sorry, that was a later film I made. No, it was called *The Living Dead,* but then the Romero film came out.

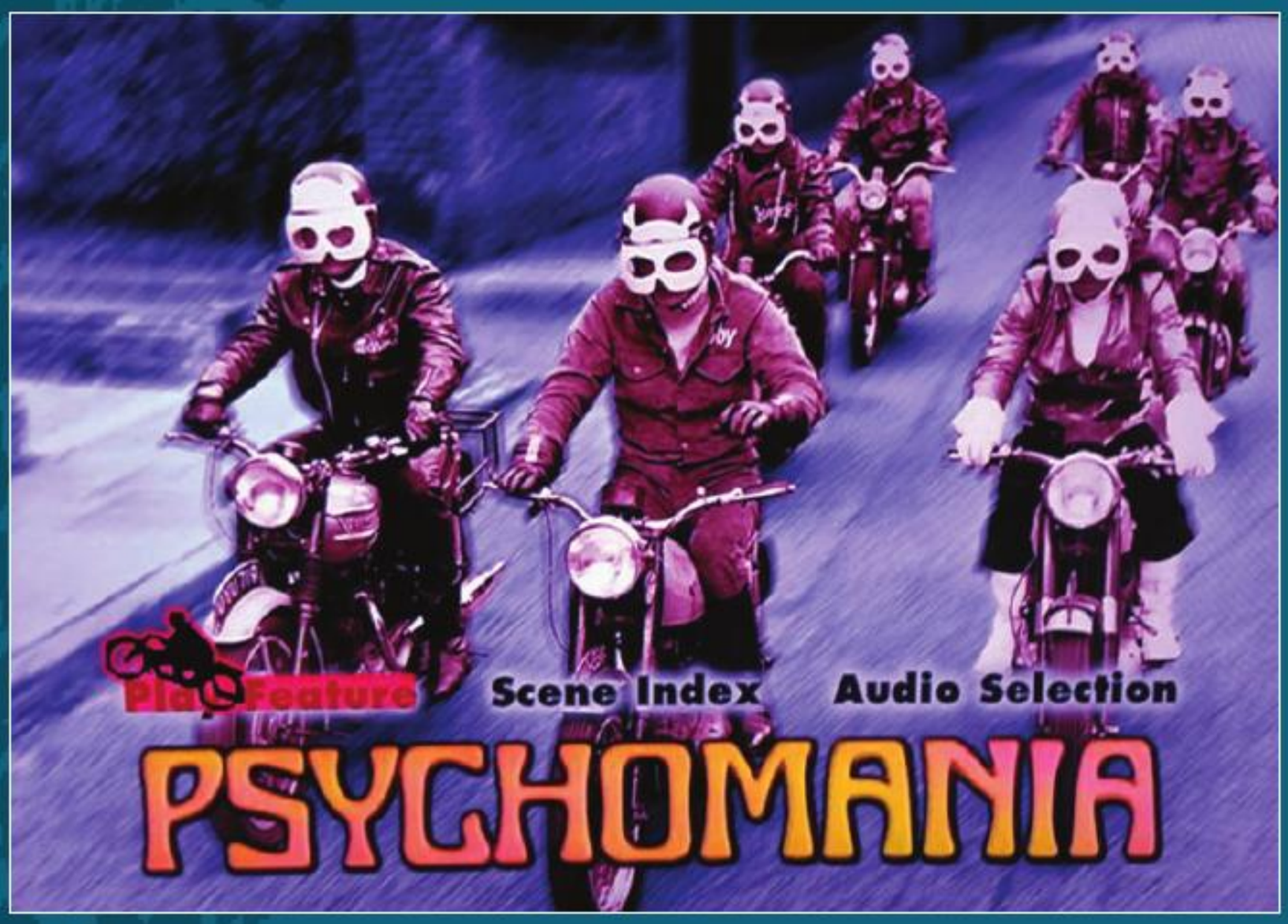
What was the read through like?
We didn't have one. They hired Don Sharp, who'd just done second unit work on *Puppet on a Chain*, huge speedboat chases in Amsterdam, and they thought he'd be ideal to shoot the action and the stunt work.

What was Don Sharp like to work with?
He was fed up with us. We were all very young and we all played this card game, *Pick Up Two* (also known as *Switch, Two Four Jacks* or *Black Jack,* Ed). We were playing this game all the time and no one was concentrating on the film. He couldn't get us on the set and he got so angry he kept it in one of scenes, the prison scene, where we're all playing *Pick Up Two*! We were all overexcited and very silly and not taking it at all seriously. People talk about it as a great comedy horror. I don't think it was. I don't think the comedy was intended at all.

I think you're right there. You say about the comedy and it's Beryl Reid who'd been in *Dr. Phibes Rises Again* who I was surprised to see in it. Did she treat it all as a joke?
Yes a huge joke. I'd worked with her before. My first West End show was a revue called, *All Square,* with her in 1963 and we stayed in touch. And George Sanders would corpse too. He'd just say, "I can't say this shit!"

There's a great scene right at the start where you go back to your nice mansion, as every biker does, and you meet up with your mum Beryl Reid and then you burst into a dance for no obvious reason.
Neither of us could do the waltz and we kept treading on each other's toes all the time. I suppose it was to prove how close we were as mother and son.

Above: *Psychomania* marked one of the final roles for faded Hollywood star George Sanders, who killed himself not long after the film came out



chair came out and written on the back in biro was George Sanders. That might have been the start of him thinking, "I want to go and kill myself!"

It's ironic that the film was about doing away with yourself and I read that he'd always been quite vocal about committing suicide. Did he talk much about it on set?
No, actually, all my memories of him are just corpsing and having to do another take as he was laughing so much at how ridiculous it all was.

I read that he also enjoyed being rude and disagreeable. That's clearly not how you found him.
No, he and Beryl got on very well. He wasn't on set very long and they were looking after him as well as they could on those type of films. It was the nadir of the British film industry at that time. There was nothing being made that was any good. I did some stuff in the 60's when there was an English film boom, when the Americans were coming here and making swinging London movies and that, but by that time, the early 70s, it had all died out. That's why poor old Cliff (Nicky's stunt double) kept ending up in hospital because stunt men at that time did it all, whereas in America stuntmen specialised in, say, falling off horses or rolling cars, or doing bike tricks. Here there were probably 50 stuntmen trying to make a living so they had to do everything, ride horses, ride bikes, and they weren't specialists.

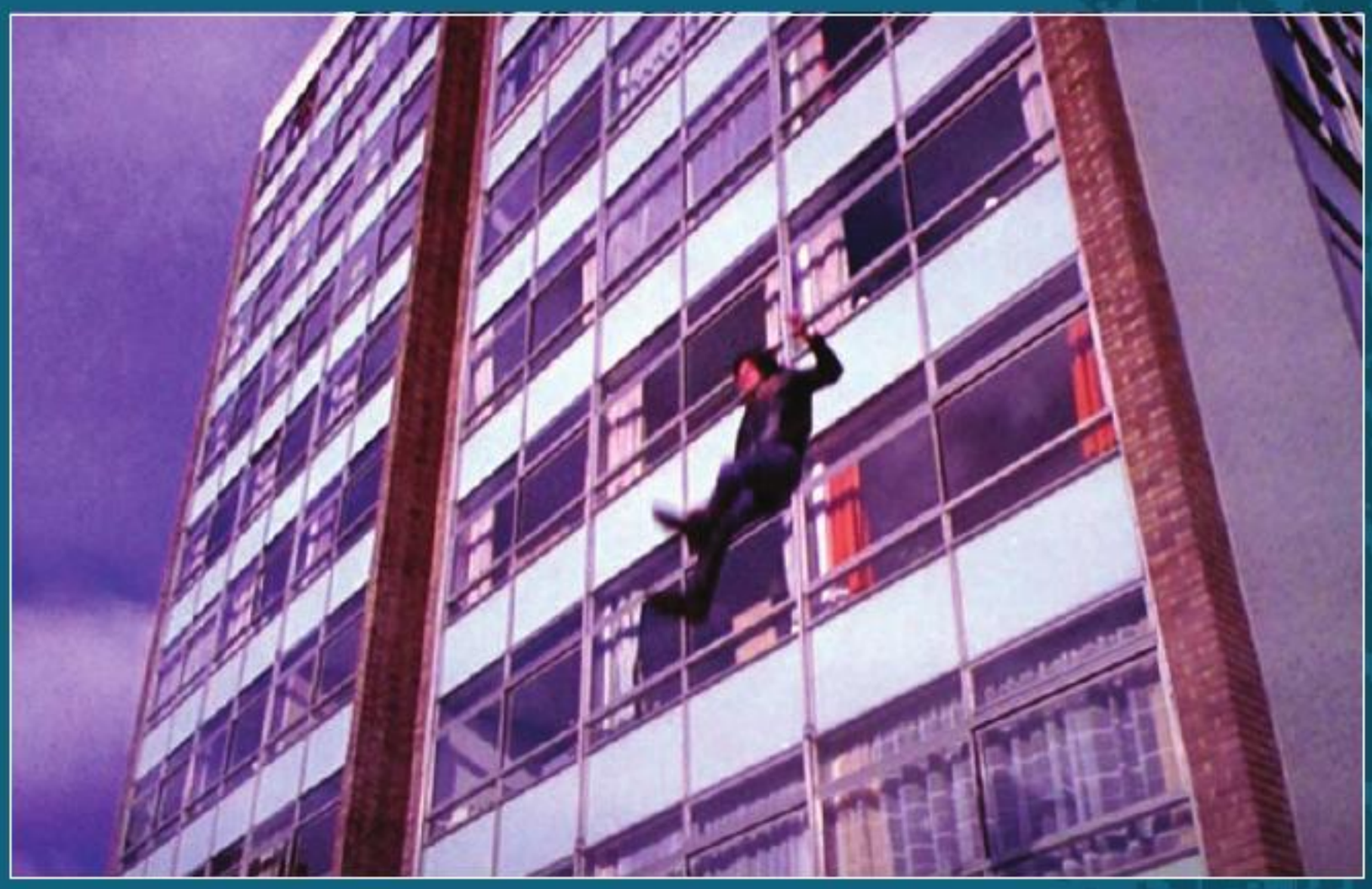
I notice Rocky Taylor is in the cast.
Yes, Rocky is a big stunt man and had a very bad accident later on in his career. (*He broke his back leaping from a burning building in Michael Winner's Death Wish 3, Ed*).

Above: Nicky in the final scenes of *Witchfinder General.*

Right: With Prunella Scales in *Fawlty Towers*

So will we be seeing you on *Strictly Come Dancing* anytime soon?
(Laughs) Absolutely not! It was funny but it was sad. The story goes that George Sanders saw a print of the film in Madrid and went back to his hotel and killed himself. It's said that he saw it in the afternoon and left a note saying, "I'm so bored."

The other sad thing is the first day on the picture a memo comes down from the producers' office saying there would be no chair backs for the artists. This was to save money. It didn't bother me not having my name on the back of a chair and it saved them about two or three quid, and then George Sanders didn't come until about two weeks into the shoot. All of his scenes were stuffed into a few days because he was getting paid the most, and they wanted to get him in and out quickly. There were two famous prop men down at Shepperton, Jack and Bobby who were in charge of the props, and they were so ashamed that there were no chair backs for the artists that when George Sanders turned up on set a



You've said a prerequisite for the film was being able to ride a bike. Was that for the whole cast?
No they were mainly stunt guys riding the bikes. I was the only one who really knew how to ride a bike. Mostly it was riders on the back of a trailer drawn along by trucks. But some of the stunts were fantastic. The motorway was the M3 before it opened, they were still building it. The scene where I go off the bridge and kill myself in the Thames, well Cliff managed to land in the water before the bike, which landed on top of him.

I take it that was only done once?
Yes, and I must mention the scene where drive through the wall and I tell Abby, "You're not dead." That was a polystyrene brick wall, but they kept repainting it and it stayed up for 3-4 weeks until they got to shoot it. When Cliff and the bike hit the wall, the bike went through the wall and he stayed flat against it, as it was rock hard with paint.

Being an accomplished biker yourself did you get to do any of the stunts?
No, I did a lot of the riding but none of the stunts because I was playing Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger* in the night and we couldn't afford any understudies at the Young Vic. I didn't push to do any stunts.

Cliff, your stunt double, didn't come off these stunts too well. Did anything else go wrong stunt-wise?
No, I don't think so. They were very clever stunts. When the guy jumps off the flyover on the motorway they timed it with a sack of sand weighing the same as the actor and they dug a hole in the motorway and filled it with mattresses. They did it all in one shot. The guy jumped off, landed on the mattresses in the pit and the truck rolled over him. The stunts were spectacular, very good.

When the gang are topping themselves, did all the stunts go to plan? I dread to think about the parachute one!
I had a superstition. I never used to go and watch when a stunt guy was doing a stunt for me in those days. I wouldn't go and watch it in case something went wrong. It frightened the life out of me. I stayed in my, well, whatever it was... we didn't have trailers.

What about your escape from the grave scene?
That was a stunt double. Outside the corner of the frame there's a guy on a motorcycle and he rides down into a tunnel and out the other side. He started about half a mile away going very fast and then down a ramp into a tunnel and then up out of the grave.

I must ask you about that scene when your character dies and is buried with his head above ground level.
(Laughs) ...and that boy singing that song. He wrote it and thought it was his big moment to be a rock star!

I presume they ran out of time digging the ditch before they started filming the scene.
Yes, exactly. After they finished singing they bent me over and filled in the grave. In America there's a new DVD out of it with all of us who are still alive doing interviews . My son gave me a copy for Christmas. It's really funny.

It's a particularly gore free horror film even though it was an X certificate in the UK. Was there no budget whatsoever for a bit of blood and guts?
No, no. The people who made the most money out of it were the motorcycle mechanics. The bikes were falling to pieces. They were just mending them the whole time to keep the buggers going!

Fans are obsessive about the film and I found a website about the locations. The only omission was the supermarket, as to whether it was a real one or a set.
It was a real supermarket, or actually a mini mart. The most extraordinary note I had from Don Sharp was about my smoking. I was a smoker at the time and I liked to smoke in movies because I got free cigarettes. I was smoking in a scene and Don or the producer said, "Put the cigarette out!" I said, "Why?" He said, "Because we'll never be able to sell it to television if you're smoking."
"But I've just run over a baby in a pram!" He said, "No, that's all right, but smoking they won't stand for."

You said that these were the only films being made in Britain at the time.
And the *Confessions of a Window Cleaner* type film soft porn things.

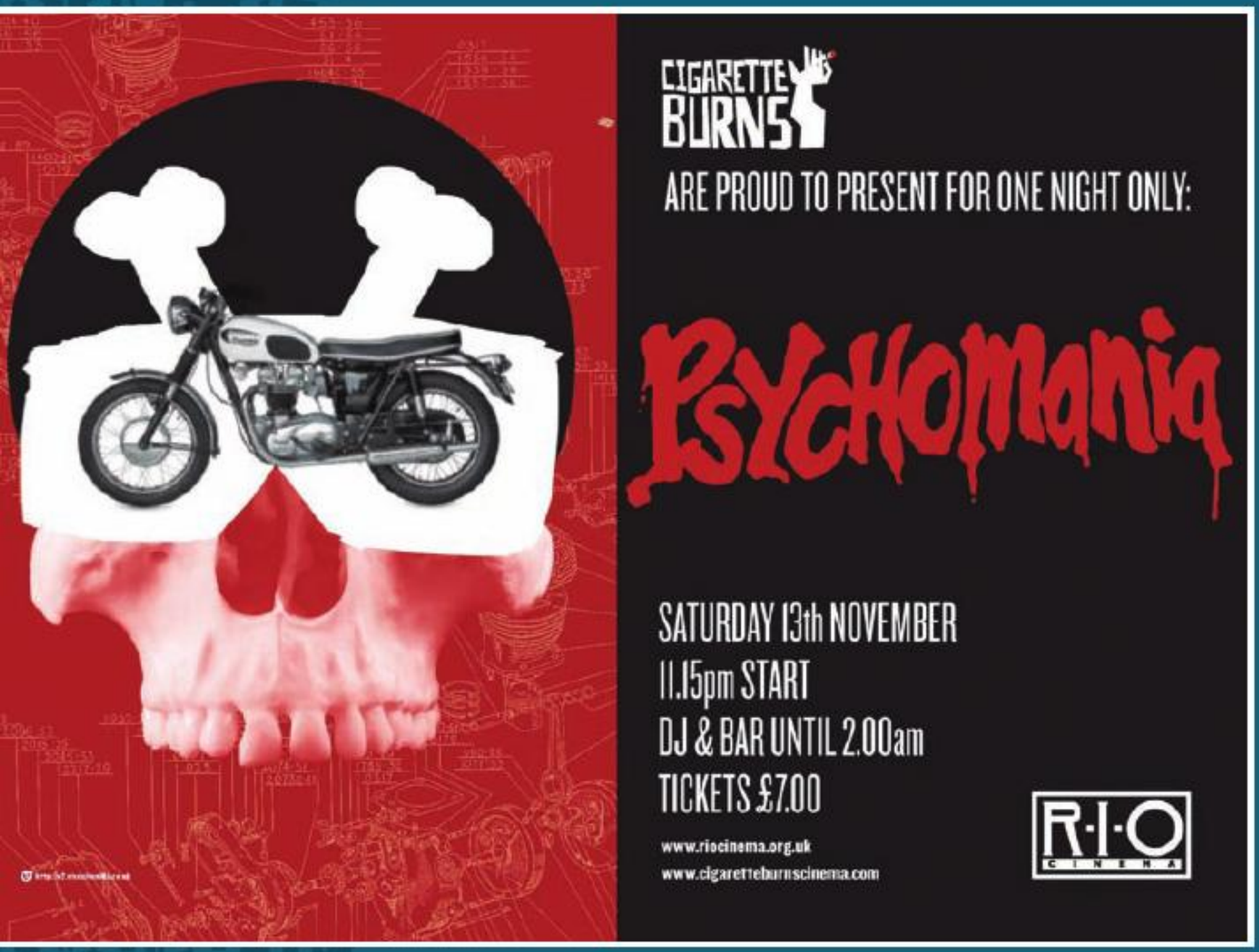
It seems almost de-rigueur that every actor of your generation would make these low budget films. Is that fair to say?

Yes absolutely. Unfortunately when they're so bad they become collector's items.

Low budget films always seem to be uncomfortable experiences for both cast and crew. Was that true on *Psychomania?*
Well we were just kids just having a laugh. I don't think we thought it would ever come out. I remember being tired because I was doing huge theatre roles in the night. I was probably doing three of those movies a year.

When did you first see the film and what did you think?
I can't remember ever seeing it in the cinema. I saw bits when we were post-synching. And then I saw it 20 years later on the telly. I was down at my brother's farm and my two boys, Christopher and Joe, who are both film composers now, were about 6 or 7 at the time. Christopher, who has always been a nervy one, couldn't turn his light off because he thought I'd turn into a piece of stone.

What's your overriding memory of the whole film?
Having a laugh. I did a TV documentary a few years back about dodgy 60's movies and they did *Psychomania*, and I sat and watched it with the guy who was doing the show, and I commented on it. At one point he says, "When you're watching this, how do you feel?" and I



Right: The actor in more recent times, still retaining his boyish good looks

said, "Ashamed."

Well, you say that, but you did *Syriana* a few years ago with George Clooney and if it's any compensation he did a film in the 80s called *Return of the Killer Tomatoes.*

There you are. We all had to make a bob or two occasionally, particularly in this country where there's no money in anything.

I know, you should see what the Editor pays me! *(The Euro is still legal, Ed).* Your stage work is extensive, and you went on to play Laertes in Hamlet afterwards.

Yes that was for Jonathan Miller

Was that a deliberate move to get back to something a bit more highbrow?

No, my career was in the theatre so I was just following that through. My dear old friend Ian Ogilvy used to say to me, "You've got a master plan." But I never had a master plan, I just worked in the theatre and picked up what work I could outside. You couldn't really do television either, because they had different union rules from the theatre. The only television I could do was like *Fawlty Towers*, with my old friend John Cleese, because they would shoot that on a Sunday when I was in the theatre. He wanted people who could do farce. It wasn't a deliberate move to get away from *Psychomania* or *Vampira* or whatever, they were just sideshows from my career to earn a bit of extra money for my family.

Vampira you did in 1975, but you've done very little horror since. Why's that?

I did a film a couple of years ago, *Truth or Dare*. I only worked a couple of days on it because they were *Witchfinder General* obsessives. One of the houses in the film was a *Witchfinder* location and they wanted me in it because I'd been in *Witchfinder*.

So what is it that people most want to know about *Psychomania?*

They are really quite obsessive about it and I have people in the street shout lines out at me. In the days of lift operators I was once stuck in a lift with this guy quoting whole passages at me. Someone in America has dubbed it with a completely different set of dialogue. I went to one of those fan evenings and somebody gave me a copy of it.

A bit like that Woody Allen film, *What's up Tiger Lily?*

Yeah but not half as funny. It's a bit silly to do it with something like *Psychomania,* because it's funny enough as it is.

All this was 40 years ago, what are you doing now?

I retired a couple of years ago. 2011 was my 50th year in the business. I've got two primary cancers and a secondary and am also having huge problems with kidney stones because of the radiation treatment I have had. I rang my agent and said, "Look I love doing radio, I like doing audio books, if anyone offers me a couple of days on a film I'll do it but I'm not doing any more auditions."

It wasn't being grand, it's just so stressful explaining to 14-year-old media study students what you've been doing for the last 50 years. They rang me before Christmas because I did the second ever episode, first series of *Downton Abbey*, and asked me, "Are you fit to work? Because Julian (Fellows) wants to write the character back in." And I said, "Yes." So I've just done a couple of episodes of it, which was fun.

I'm very sorry to hear about the cancer.

It's OK. I've been living with it for 12 years now, but I haven't been able to do theatre. I've not done it since 2005 because I'm taking a very powerful chemo drug that makes me water retentive, so on stage I sweat and dehydrate and my voice goes. But I'm not missing the theatre, really. The treatment will stay forever as I have quite a rare cancer. I've got a prostate cancer but I've also got a cancer that comes back if you don't take a chemo pill. It did come back once before, but I've got a wonderful team of surgeons and I'm enjoying retirement. I get a good state pension, and with *Fawlty Towers* and 2 episodes of *Midsomer Murders* always cropping up, they keep paying me. I just wish *Psychomania* had paid me something. That was the great shame that British Equity never got it together. I did *Syriana* in America on a SAG contract and I get cheques every 3-4 months when they show it on TV, but we never got it together in this country. I could have made a lot of money out of *Psychomania* and *Witchfinder General*. In America it really works well. The trouble is they show *Psychomania* on the TV and the next day I go in the pub and they all say, "The drinks are on you tonight!" They're not. I got £150 in the first place and never seen a penny since.

£150?

Well, probably about £90 a week for four weeks, maybe. I never got on the Hammer bandwagon and I would have enjoyed that.

Ian Ogilvy

Ian Ogilvy was the star of a trio of horror movies directed by Michael Reeves, including Tigon's *The Sorcerers* and *Witchfinder General*. He chats with Simon Hooper about the late director.

Vincent Price's *Witchfnder General* pays a bloody price for his evil deeds. The real-life Matthew Hopkins died peacefully in his bed!

WITCHFINDER MEMORIES

At 8 years of age a young man named Michael Reeves told his mother that he wanted to be a film director. By 25 he had realised that ambition in spades and was being recognised as a major talent, having directed three highly regarded horror films. But before he hit 26 he would be dead.

As a boy, Reeves had been brought up by his widowed mother, and his passion was making his own films. At fifteen the first of a series of life changing events occurred. His mother came into a substantial sum of money, enabling him a certain degree of freedom to finance his home made films. At 17 years of age he bought a ticket to Hollywood and tracked down the home address of his idol, the film director Don Siegel, who had achieved notable acclaim with the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and *The Killers* (1964). The seasoned director opened his front door to the fledgling filmmaker, who immediately told him he was a fan and that Siegel was the greatest director in the world.

Siegel was flattered by the boy who had flown all the way over from the UK to tell him this, and decided to take him under his wing, offering him a job as his assistant. Reeves was not the only person who held Siegel in such high esteem - Clint Eastwood was to regard him as a mentor too, casting him in a cameo role as a barman in his first foray into directing, *Play Misty For Me* (1971).

Reeves work ethic impressed Siegel, and soon the youngster found himself in Yugoslavia, having persuaded producer Irving Allen to let him work on the Viking extravaganza *The Long Ships* (1964), starring Richard Widmark. That same year Reeves co-wrote *Castle of the Living Dead* with Lorenzo Sabatini who also directed.

Paul Maslansky was the film's producer and he was another who Reeves impressed. So much so that he let him direct the second unit on the production. Then to Maslansky's annoyance Reeves upped sticks and left without letting him know where he was going or what he was doing. 18 months later Maslansky received a phone call. It was Reeves telling him that he had a script and £15,000 and wanted him to produce. The film was, *Revenge of the Blood*

THIS IS HORROR!!
Deadlier than DRACULA!
Wilder than the WEREWOLF!
more frightening than FRANKENSTEIN!
THE SHE BEAST
EASTMANCOLOR and SCOPE
starring BARBARA STEELE/JOHN KARLSEN/MEL WELLES
A EUROPIX CONSOLIDATED RELEASE
THIS IS TERROR!!!
BEAUTY AFTER BEAUTY DRAGGED TO A SUNKEN CRYPT... PETRIFIED PLAY-CAPTIVES OF
THE EMBALMER
starring MAUREEN BROWN/GIN MART A EUROPIX CONSOLIDATED RELEASE

Left: Ian with director Lucio Fulci, who plays a newspaper editor in a cameo role in *Zombie Flesh Eaters*.

Above right: The actor and his *Survivors* co-stars, Lucy Fleming (niece of Bond author Ian) and Carolyn Seymour.

Beast, though in the US it was known as *The She Beast*.

Reeves was an enthusiastic and inspiring character and Maslansky couldn't resist the offer, so off they went to Rome and in three weeks the film had been shot. Aware that to sell it would need a name Maslansky chose Barbara Steele, who'd made a name for herself in Mario Bava's *Black Sunday*. Her fee was $1000 for a day's work. Nice work if you can get it.

Unfortunately for her, there was not a particularly good union in Rome and the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) was not as powerful as it is today. In a shrewd move by Maslansky he didn't specify the number of hours in that one contracted day and she found herself working a straight 18 hours. Steele didn't speak to Maslansky for almost 30 years after that stunt. The film had its light moments too. Jay Riley, who played the She Beast, would often walk out onto the nearby roads in full make up and cause road accidents as he tried to hitch rides.

Perhaps most importantly it was the first studio film that Reeves made with a young actor called Ian Ogilvy, who he'd struck up a friendship with previously. Ogilvy was also cast in Reeves' second film, *The Sorcerers*. This was co-written by Reeves with Tom Baker (not *Dr Who*) and was their first dealing with Tony Tenser and his Tigon Productions.

Tenser had put together a package with Reeves, Ogilvy and the great Boris Karloff, still a name despite his best days being behind him. Like *Revenge of the Blood Beast* it was a low budget affair, made quickly but efficiently which inevitably meant cutting corners - often at the expense of safety considerations. Ogilvy found himself riding a motorbike whilst Reeves sat in the open boot of a car in front of him filming them as he and his lady passenger hurtled headlong down the motorway without helmets. The guerrilla filmmaking tactics backfired most spectacularly when a car that was to be blown up proved to have too much petrol inside. When detonated, not only was the car destroyed but several of the nearby buildings had their windows blown out. Not wanting to have their collar felt by the law, the crew grabbed the last shot before fleeing the scene leaving the blazing car in their wake.

And so it came to what would be Reeves' final film, *Matthew Hopkins: Witchfinder General*. Tenser had received a proof copy of Ronald Bassett's book and seeing its potential asked Reeves to write and direct a film version. With Baker again co-writing, they turned in their first draft script to Tenser.

This was going to be an expensive project beyond the finances of Tigon and so they would need a partner to stump up some of the money. This is where AIP came in and where, for Reeves, the problems began. With the project greenlit, casting began. Ogilvy was the heroic lead, and the role of *Witchfinder General* had been specifically written for Donald Pleasence.

As far as Pleasence was concerned, AIP were having none of it. Vincent Price was under contract to them and the money men insisted that he would be the Witchfinder. Reeves had no choice and the Hollywood Ham fresh off the camp high jinks of the TV incarnation of *Batman* flew in from sun-drenched LA to weatherbeaten and windy Norfolk. Holy brass monkeys!

With AIP wanting more sex scenes and nudity, and Reeves wanting the film to be realistic in its portrayal of violence, it was inevitable that the film would fall foul of the censors. It was a particularly violent film for the UK at the time, and the BBFC, headed by John Trevelyan, wanted cuts, even though Trevelyan recognised it as being a good film. Reeves wrote Trevelyan a letter imploring him not to make cuts as it would undermine the film's impact. The final version that hit the cinema had the nudity cut and much of the violence toned down. Inevitably this 'full & uncut' version is now available on DVD. In the US it was retitled *The Conqueror Worm* at the behest of AIP, who wanted to link it in with their recent series of Roger Corman produced Edgar Allan Poe films. Reviews were generally mixed but many acknowledged that it was the work of a talented director.

The film took its toll on Reeves and afterwards there were a number of half-finished and abandoned projects leaving him at best despondent and at worst depressed. In an effort to cope with that and other problems in his personal life he began taking anti-depressants and drinking heavily.

On the morning of 11th February 1969, Reeves was found dead in his apartment. The coroner's verdict was that he had come home drunk and, suffering from insomnia, mistakenly taken too many pills. British cinema was robbed of a clearly talented director whose style was maturing with each successive film. At the time he was in pre-production on *The Oblong Box*, based on an Edgar Allan Poe story. It was to star Vincent Price.

We spoke to Ian Ogilvy, actor and friend of Michael Reeves, and now residing in L.A., about his memories of working on *Witchfinder General*.

You met and worked with Michael Reeves on *Carrion* when you were in your teens. How did that come about?
A mutual friend called Paul Vestey was at school with Mike and he suggested it - since I wanted to be an actor and Mike wanted to be a director, that we should get together so it was a meeting Vestey arranged.

Was the script that you were offered and accepted the same as the one that was eventually shot?
Pretty much the same. Small changes are always made to scripts but nothing significant on *Witchfinder General*.

We first see you in the film riding a horse and I understand that you are quite an accomplished rider anyway, but did the chase on horses later on in the film go smoothly or did the film's insurers insist on a double?
I don't have any knowledge of the insurance side of things, but when I broke a bone in my foot during the brief fight scene in the tavern, the insurance company apparently paid out £10,000, which allowed Mike to shoot some stuff which had been previously unbudgeted - I don't know what though. I did almost all my own fast riding. There are one or two shots the stuntman performed - one I remember is a jump over a fallen tree, which I thought would be more safely done by somebody else.

You worked with Michael Reeves on *The Sorcerers* and *Revenge of the Blood Beast* prior to *Witchfinder General* and I've read that he kept threatening to fire you on each film, but that when you called his bluff he never would. Why would he do that? Was it a joke on his part?
He never threatened to fire me. He would sometimes suggest other actors with whom he was intending to work on his next movie - actors other than me, I mean - but he ended up using me in all 3 movies.

This was a typically low budget film. Did you have to do choreograph your own fights such as the one in the bar?
The fights were choreographed by the famous stuntman Alf Joint.

For a low budget film there are a lot of stunts such as duckings, burnings, fights etc which could have easily gone awry. Did anything not go according to plan?
People fell off horses. I broke my foot. The stunt woman who was lowered onto the fire burnt her wrists a little. Vincent objected to stuff and would sulk. And in movies, practically nothing ever goes entirely to plan.

There are some tremendous tracking, dolly & crane shots which must have been very time consuming for such a low budget film. Was Reeves very organised or did he have a good 1st A.D (assistant director)?
Extremely organised. And he had a great DoP in Johnny Coquillon, who would have been responsible for the shots - rather than an AD, whom I don't remember but who I'm sure was terrific. He would have had to have been terrific, considering the amount of material we shot each day.

Though Hilary Dwyer plays the female lead I understand that you had your own suggestion as to who should have the role? Who was the actress and did she get to audition?
I suggested my old friend Nicola Pagett who later played Elizabeth Bellamy in *Upstairs Downstairs*. Mike and I auditioned her in my flat and I think she must have thought the project was going to be some little amateur effort and she wasn't wildly enthusiastic during her reading – Mike decided he didn't like her enough and found Hilary, who turned out to be better casting for the part.

The antagonism between Michael Reeves and Vincent Price is legendary but Price has alleged that all the actors had a bad time as Reeves didn't know how to speak to actors? Was that your experience too?
Mike didn't speak much to actors, at least not on the set, because he always claimed he didn't really understand how actors did what they did and he'd much prefer simply to cast the movie correctly and then let the actors do their thing, with little or no interference from the director. With Vincent, Mike was desperate that his star wouldn't produce any of his campy, over-the-top tricks that Vincent sometimes went in for in a number of his earlier films, so he actually tried to direct Price, with predictable results. No, only Vincent was unhappy. Everybody else had a ball. Mike wasn't in the least stand-offish - he just had a lot on his plate.

Left:
Ian with director Lucio Fulci, who plays a newspaper editor in a cameo role in *Zombie Flesh Eaters*.

Above right:
The actor and his *Survivors* co-stars, Lucy Fleming (niece of Bond author Ian) and Carolyn Seymour.

I've read that Price was actually quite sociable and Reeves would excuse himself from meals to carry on working on the shooting schedule and script for the following day. Did you find him to be something of a workaholic?
It was a low budget film which meant that a lot of homework had to be done if we were to stay on schedule. Mike worked very hard at this, so often wasn't to be seen socialising with the actors. He would have liked to very much - he just didn't have the time.

I'd read that Price kept falling off his horse and Reeves refused to enquire after his welfare antagonising Price even more. Is that true?
I think Vincent might have slid off once, rather slowly and onto soft ground. If

Above: Ian takes aim at the start of Michael Reeves' *Witchfinder General*, and is seen chained up with Hilary Dwyer in the film's final scenes

Right: Boris Karloff and Catherine Lacey meet a grisly end in *The Sorcerers*

Mike didn't ask after his welfare, that would have been a careless oversight, not a planned rudeness.

Did the atmosphere between director and Hollywood star cause problems on set even when he wasn't in the scenes?
No. As I say, everybody else had a good time.

Price seems to veer from either being irascible to being full of bonhomie. How did you find him?
Charming, but then I had very few scenes with him. He was a lot of fun in the evening, regaling us all with stories of Hollywood, jangling his turquoise bangles all the time and showing us the latest antique something or other he'd picked up for a song in Bury St Edmunds. The bad atmosphere was not that noticeable - both Vincent and Mike were utterly professional and I never heard of any blazing row happening - I think the whole relationship between them has been somewhat overblown. They both got on with their jobs politely enough. The occasional barb from Price, the occasional semi-humorous retort from Mike.

As a young director did the crew give him a hard time?
No, they wanted to do their best for him. He already had a small reputation from *The Sorcerers* and he'd got Vincent Price on board - it was all cool and friendly. Sometimes there was a bit of grumbling about the long hours, but nothing worse than that.

There's a significant amount of the film that's been shot day for night. Was that a budgetary constraint because of the cost of shooting with a union crew?
No. Nearly all night shots were filmed day for night back then. The film stock wasn't all that great for night shooting and day for night was accepted by audiences everywhere. There were also time and budget constraints. The huge arc lamps needed for night shooting were expensive to rent and everything takes twice as long to do at night, so...

It must have been cold shooting in East Anglia from September – October. Can't have been an ideal time of year to be shooting so many outdoor location scenes...
Well, the leaves were still out on the trees and on the whole the weather was pretty nice, so I don't remember problems in that area.

I understand the locals residents said that after the Lavenham village scenes had been shot there had been a lot of unexplained ghostly occurrences afterwards. What did they tell you about it all?
I heard about that. The residents claimed to have heard a lot of banging and crashing and wailing and moaning from their ghosts. I think it was a lot of fanciful nonsense.

Legend has it that Reeves was furious that Price had been drinking by the time it came to shoot the climactic scene. What notes did he give you about your axe attack on him?
He told me to lay into him with my rubber axe. I said I had no intention of doing anything of the sort. The axe was very hard and heavy and, while it couldn't cut, it could certainly bruise. But they padded Vincent up anyway, much against his will, and I hit him a few times, being as gentle as I could but acting enormous effort, which seemed reasonably convincing - well, convincing enough to cause the then censor to demand that most of the axe blows be cut from the finished film.

Is it true that AIP wanted you and Hilary Dwyer riding off into the sunset together? Was that ever shot?
There was a different ending in the original screenplay. I can't remember what it was. Something to do with a gypsy encampment. But Mike would never have given us a happy ending, no matter what AIP demanded.

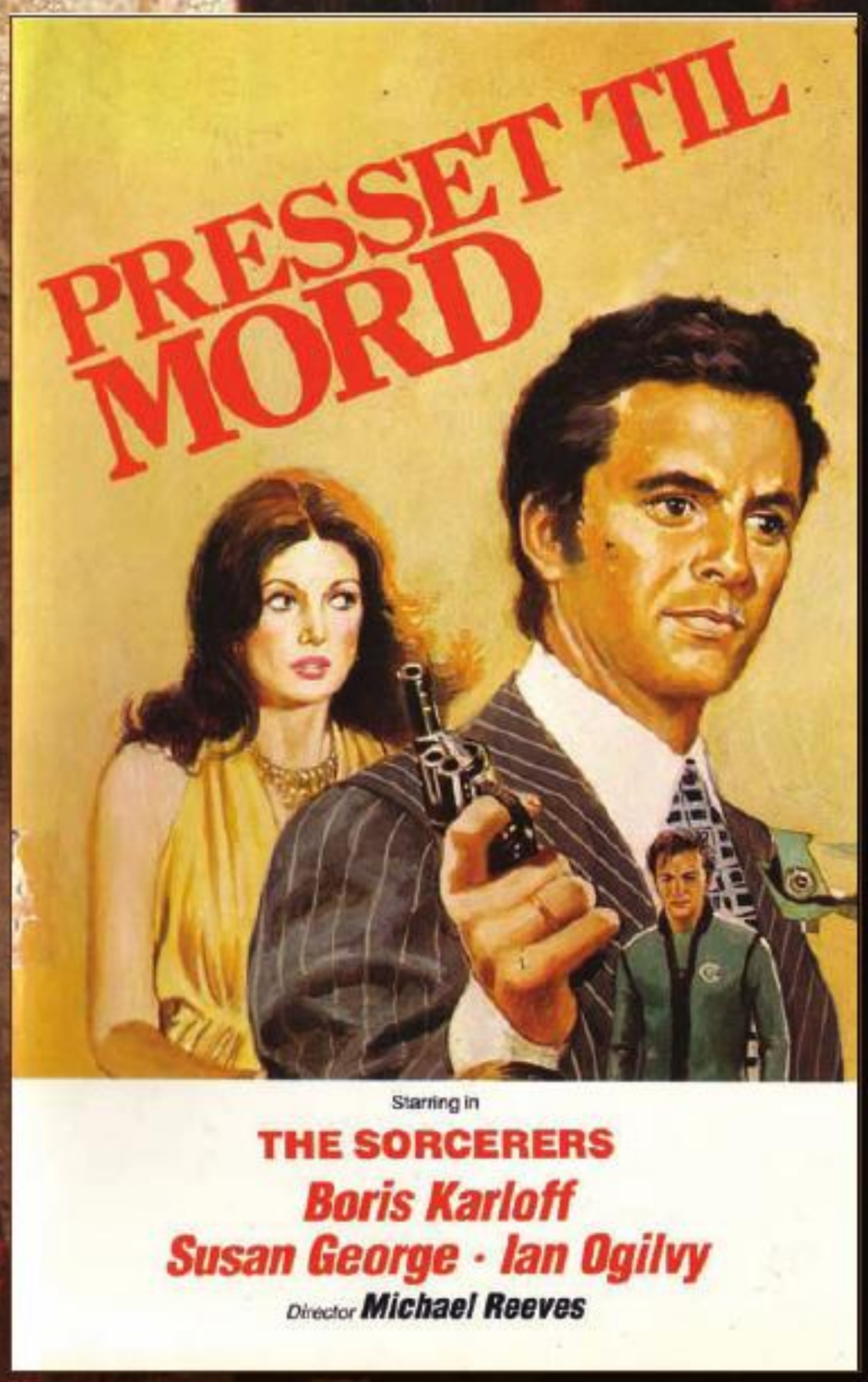
Reeves tragically died very young and was said to have suffered from depression. Did this manifest itself in any way on set?
Not at all. He loved making movies and was at his happiest on a film set. His depressions came in the pauses between pictures, never while shooting.

John Trevelyan, Head of the BBFC at the time, is said to have liked the film but knew the nudity and some of the violence had to be cut which has been reinstated in some versions. There is an argument that the cut version is better as it leaves more to the imagination. What's your view on the best cut of the film?
I liked Trevelyan's cut. I think he was mostly right about the violence.

In retrospect do you think the film has garnered its reputation purely because of its director passing away so young or is it the masterpiece that fans perceive it as?
It's not a masterpiece. It has a reputation larger than its worth. It's excellent for its budget, its schedule, the youth of its writers and director, for the excellent and subtle performance from Vincent, for some of its cinematography, for the plot, for the superb musical score by Paul Ferris - and Mike dying young makes it that much more appealing, of course.

After the success of *Return of The Saint* you moved to the US in the 80's. Was that instigated by the state of the UK film industry at the time?
(Laughs) No. I did 3 American pilots for US TV series, one after the other, and on the strength of the apparent interest in me from this side of the Atlantic I decided to see if I'd work more in the US than I was in the UK. It turned out to be about the same.

Apart from acting you're also a very successful children's author. What inspired you to move into that field?
Poverty. I found I could write pretty well, and had an active and fairly creative imagination - and so I wrote my books and plays in order to regain some of the income that all we actors have lost to Reality TV. I'm pleased to say I managed that.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THE MONSTROUS MR BEAN

Sawney, Flesh of Man tells the story of Scotland's most notorious cannibal family. Mick Lewis meets the film's star, David Hayman, and its director, Ricky Wood.

Ever since I became fascinated with the legend of Sawney Bean, the infamous cave-dwelling Scottish cannibal who allegedly existed in the 17th (although some say claim 15th) century, I have longed to see a film version that would do justice to the crazy and gruesome exploits of this most horrible of Mr Beans...

With the exception of the softcore abomination that was *Samhain* (although rather a fun abomination, I have to admit, a guilty sex gore pleasure that has still to see an uncut release anywhere), cinematic portrayals of Sawney have been decidedly few and far between. Or should I say non-existent. For decades there have been murmurings of attempts to film the Bean Clan but all have come to nothing. Until now.

A new production company has just entered the cave. Say hello to Philabeg Films, a small family-run affair comprising director Ricky Wood jnr, cinematographer Ranald Wood and dad Richard Wood on writing duties. It's entirely apt that a film detailing the atrocities of a Scottish family of inbreds should be handled by a ...Scottish family (although I hasten to add, the parallels end there!)

Sawney, Flesh of Man, a modern day retelling of the tale following the direct bloodline of the original family of flesh eaters has wowed audiences at various festivals and is just to be released on DVD and Blu-ray by 101 Films.

Although it is a low budget movie, you would be hard pressed to find any evidence of that on screen. The cinematography is breathtaking, matching anything captured on *Braveheart* at a zillionth of the budget. Sweeping panoramas of the Scottish Highlands (Glen Coe and the Isle of Skye were the vivid locations) will convince the viewer they are witnessing a mega budget spectacle, and the beautiful but stark locations certainly add to the brooding, brutal atmosphere of the film.

The direction is pacy and fluid. Scenes of tension are handled deftly, and assuredly, giving the lie to the director's freshman status. Besides imbuing his film with an atmosphere of dark foreboding, Ricky Wood Jnr orchestrates some vivid and engaging performances, presided over by a stunning tour of duty from veteran David Hayman as Sawney.

Hayman conveys all the manic ferocity of the legendary cannibal, while reigning in the grisly Scottish brawn with a delicious touch of cellar-dark humour. The barely controlled anarchy of his performance dominates a film of equal ferocity. Make no mistake, this film does not shy away from the gruesome habits of lore. It positively revels in blood, guts and dismemberment, and the biggest relief of all is the butchery is conveyed entirely using real physical effects. CGI gore is the curse of the modern day horror film, and the sure sign of a low budget stinker.

Intriguingly, director Wood explains his decision to use prosthetics over CGI as being down to budgetary reasons. Most low budget horrors use cheap and nasty CGI for the very same reasons and manage to sink their films immediately as a result. This is a defiantly visceral and punchy film, peppered with sly wit and clever touches such as the use of a London Hansom Cab with blacked out windows as Sawney's method of abducting his female victims.

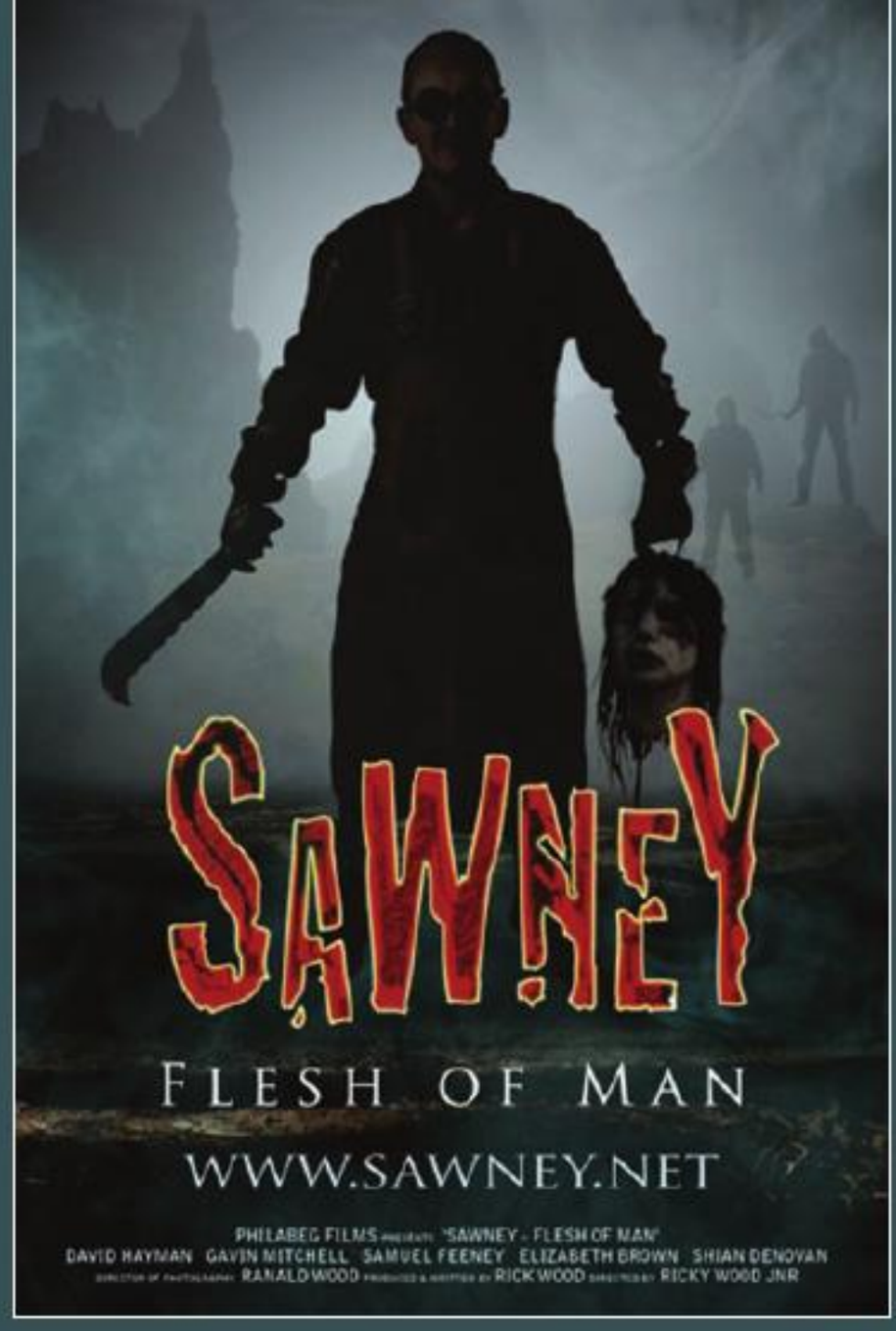
As I mentioned, the legend of the Bean Clan has long haunted me, ever since my fascination led me to stay the night in the alleged actual cave location of the killing crew near Ballantrae. Not long after, my novel, *The Bloody Man*, came out, pursuing pretty much the same idea that informs *Sawney, Flesh of Man* - that one survivor of the clan escaped the mass arrests of the large inbred clan and the subsequent executions in Edinburgh. These were the factors that caused me to chase Ricky Wood Jnr down and undertake to find out exactly what inspired him in turn to tackle the tale of Sawney Bean. While I was at it, I thought I would chuck a few questions at Mr Bean himself, David Hayman.

The following interview was conducted by telephone with David Hayman, who was busy wrapping presents for his many humanitarian causes. Well, that threw me for a start, was this really the man I'd just seen chopping, slicing, and masturbating over dead flesh? (A real BBFC-baiting moment, right there...)

You've been acting since the 60's in innumerable roles, including such standout parts as Malcolm McLaren in *Sid and Nancy* and DCSI Mike Walker in *Trial and Retribution* among so many others, but *Sawney Bean*, the ferocious leader of the legendary cannibal clan, must surely be the strangest, and perhaps most iconic. What attracted you to take the role?

I grew up with the legend. My father used to tell me about it when we were kids. He had a motorbike and sidecar and we had holidays in Ayrshire. One time he drove us down the coast to the actual cave. I was ten and my brother was eight. It was just the creepiest feeling walking into that cave, knowing that these cannibals had attacked travellers going up and down that costal road, captured them, killed and eaten them. It's an extraordinary story, very chilling, so I was always very aware of it.

Sawney, Flesh of Man



Top: The crew line up a shot for the movie. Above: One of the mental Sawney clan!

I'd done some projects with the film-makers before, North Sea industrial projects, so when they approached me I jumped at it, and I've never been asked to do a horror film. I've always had a reputation for playing baddies, but I've never actually gone that far. It was just an opportunity I couldn't turn down. I just loved the idea that these three guys, a father and two sons were trying to do something different with their lives and with their talents, resources and experience, and I just thought I've got to help them anyway I can, help them make this movie and make it a success.

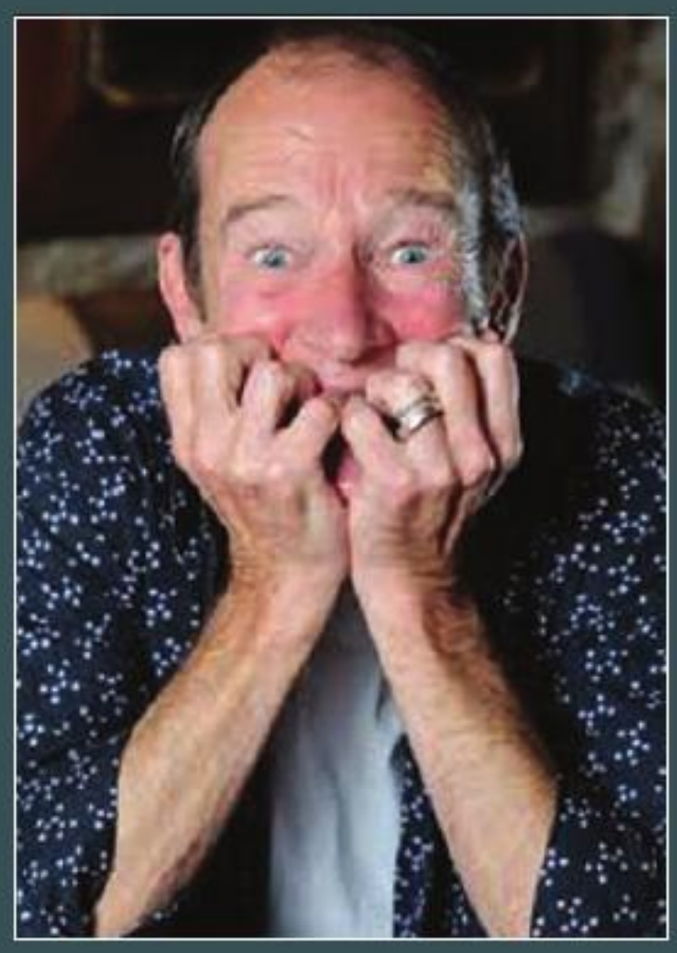
It's an independent, low budget movie but with obviously a lot of passion and creativity driving it. Do you feel the need to support low budget movies in general or was the specific Scottish nature of the project as a whole - subject matter, locations and nationality of the crew - an important factor behind you accepting the role?
Not just because it was Scottish, I've probably done about 20 short films for first time directors, executive produced and starred in them myself. I think it's really important when you get to my stage in the game with 30 years of experience to pass it on to the younger generation coming through, because it's a tough industry. So when a young kid, or in this case the Wood family, comes to me with something different you just have to support them and encourage them. So no, it's not an unusual thing for me to do this. The fact that it was Scottish was just a nice bonus, and the fact it was a great Scottish legend was an even greater bonus. No, I really love it and hope they get their money back on it.

It's a wild and grisly movie. Did you baulk at some of the more gruesome scenes or did you just get carried away by the atmosphere of visceral glee that fires the movie?
That's the lovely thing about being an actor: you can be people who you are not, playing someone a million miles away from yourself. Now I'm a character actor, I couldn't play myself. If you take someone like Sean Connery or Robert Redford, they're always playing themselves, which is what we love about them, we know we can sit back and relax and know we're in the company of a movie star. Now I'm not one of those guys. I change the way I walk and talk and whatever, so the idea of going as far away from myself – I've been a pacifist all my life and don't believe that violence evolves us one step further down the road of evolution as a species, I don't agree with violence in any form – so it's lovely to be able to play someone a million miles away from myself. You just get into the mindset of someone like that. And the gruesome nature of it doesn't really affect me because it's such a technical process with the prosthetics. And you're not actually dealing with real bodies, and I was going to say we weren't really dealing with real blood, but actually we were dealing with real blood and after a couple of days I had to say 'Guys, this is going ****ing off!' I was drinking it, I was covered in it. And I had to tell them that we couldn't go on using real blood because it is going to go off and we need to use a substitute. But no, none of that really put me off...

Your casting is obviously an inspired choice and I can't think of anybody more suited to the role of Sawney.
(Chuckles) Well that sounds like a back-handed compliment!

It might sound like one, but no, you're perfect for the role. I have to say there's a lot of arch humour in the film as well.
I hope so. I hope there are some nice touches of humour and at times I think it's kind of tongue in cheek. Especially when I'm shouting out : 'Motherrr!' I hope that bits stays in the movie.

There is talk of a prequel – a period depiction of the original Bean Clan's activities as opposed to the modern slant that *SFOM* takes. If this happens



Left: Actor David Hayman played Malcolm McLaren in 1986's *Sid and Nancy* and also earned big respect from *The Dark Side* team for portraying Major Bryce in *Regeneration* (1997)

would you be interested in reprising the role of the Horrible Mr Bean?
Of course I would! I would jump at the chance, it would be fantastic. It's obviously going to be more difficult, and more expensive because everything that's on screen you'd have to make or buy, because it's period and period costs. But no, I'd be very excited about doing a prequel. It would be fab!

***Sawney, Flesh of Man* is filmed in entirely Scottish locations, including Skye and the magnificent Glencoe Pass. What was the location filming like? Glencoe makes for stunning scenery (maybe I'm a little biased as my maternal great grandmother was a Macdonald descended from survivors of the massacre, but by anybody's standards this is one of the most beautiful places on Earth). But is there any concrete reason why the makers didn't opt to film at the actual alleged location of Sawney's cave at Bennane Head?**
You'd have to ask Ricky about the choice to not use it. But it was a modern day telling of it, and it wasn't set in the cave, and I think it would have been really impractical to shoot in the actual cave as it is pretty cramped. As a director you choose the most dramatic background you can and as it was a modern day telling I'm sure Ricky felt we didn't need to be that accurate and film it in the cave for very, very practical as well as visual, dramatic reasons.

Hopefully for the prequel they will use the actual locations.
I'm sure they will, but they would have to recreate the cave in the studio as the cave is so impractical to shoot in, but you could do the exterior filming down at that coastline. It's an odd part of Scotland – that drive down from Govan to Stranraer is a strange part of the world, very, very bleak.

As for the location shooting: absolutely freezing as I'm sure you can imagine, even down in the dungeon setting in Aberdeen. But I love location shooting. You can CGI it but it's never the same. And the landscape became a real personality in the film.

I've mentioned the no holds barred, violent nature of the film, but are you a particular fan of the horror genre?
I can be, but they have to be very, very good for me, for them to work. I do a review show as a regular panellist and I had to review the *Twilight* series and I think they're a pile of tosh! Werewolf movies are meant to be scary and these aren't in any way scary at all. You've got to be on the edge of your seat for a horror movie and it's been a long time since I've seen a proper horror movie where you're really holding onto your partner or the arms of your seat – that's what horror movies should do. Take you completely out of yourselves, completely out of reality to a world of horror, to a nightmare world where, oh my God, I've got no reference points for any kind of reality, for my reality... help!

I have to ask about *Sid and Nancy* as it's a particular favourite of mine - if not of John Lydon. When you were playing the part of Malcolm McClaren, were you aware of the animosity towards the film from certain members of the Pistols?
Not from the Pistols no, but McClaren put a lawsuit on it. That was a long time ago. We were going to do a publicity shoot for the film whereby they got the real Malcolm McClaren and me the pretend McClaren to meet on a beach at Santa Monica at dawn for a mock shootout, but then he actually got to see bits of the finished feature and presented them with a lawsuit. A lot of my stuff was improvised, and cut from the film. I'm not sure whether he didn't like the film, or didn't like my performance... but it was all (mimics McClaren) 'Ah sod off you bunch of cunts, rah rah rah'...

And finally, this is your first horror role, and it is a corker. Did you approach it differently to your other, shall we say, less ill-mannered roles?
I think as human beings we're all capable of great acts of kindness, compassion and love but at the same time we're all capable of great acts of violence and darkness. You flick a switch, depending on the circumstances... as I say I'm a pacifist, but if I was to come home and find my wife and three children had been killed by a Death Squad or whatever, I'd want to pick up a machine gun and turn them into strawberry jam. You just imagine giving way to your own evil, to the dark side of yourself...

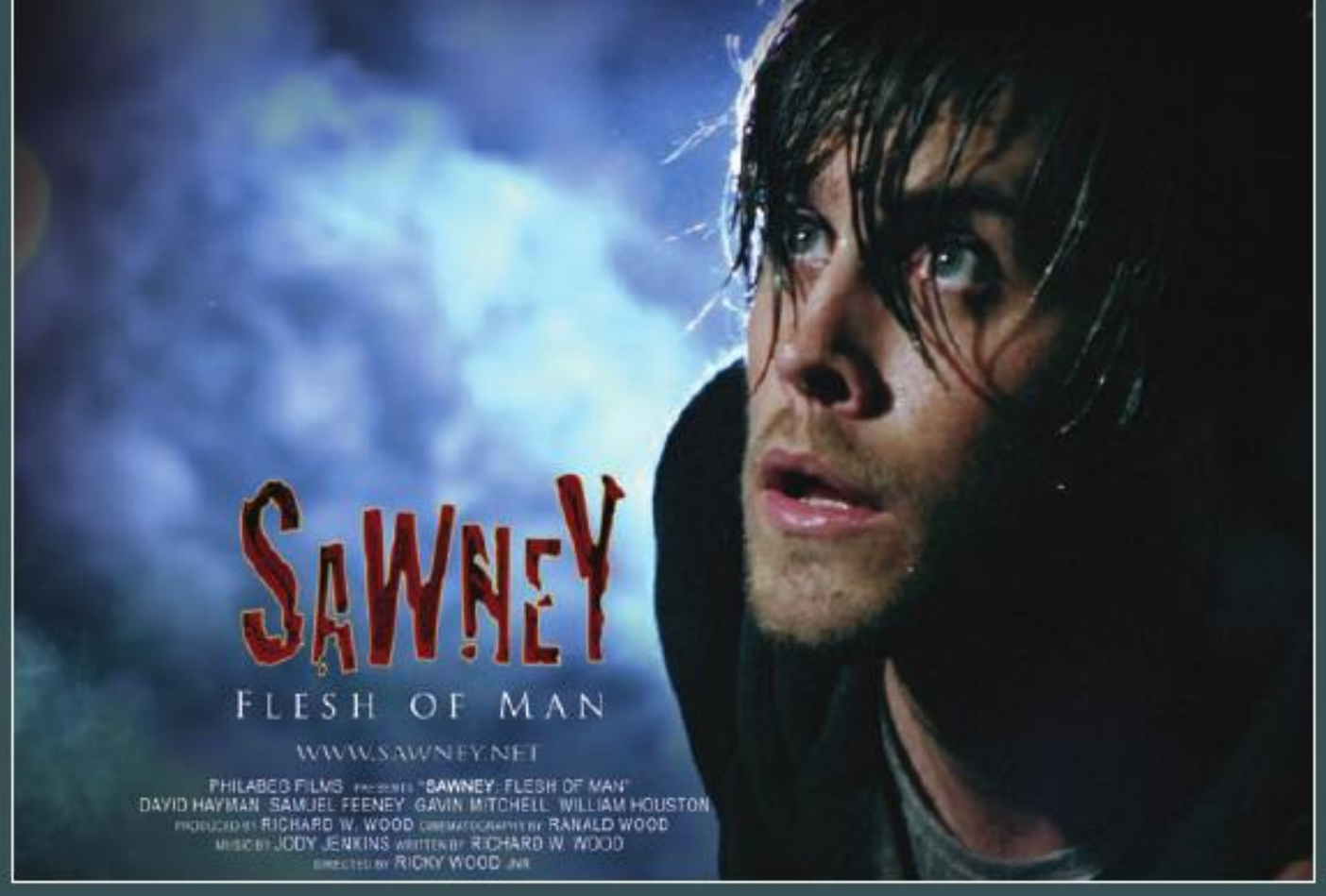
And on that fitting note, I let the venerable Sawney Bean continue wrapping presents for his charitable work...

RICKY WOOD JNR INTERVIEW

First of all, Ricky, I'd like to ask why you picked the subject of Sawney Bean for your first full length film. Have you long been interested in the legend?
I have been interested in the story since I was a child. I have always thought it would make a great movie and I am quite surprised no-one has made it already. We chose the subject as a first film because there is a commercial value there. We knew the work and effort that it would take to make this low budget movie and hope to get a return to get on with the next project. We have learned so much on this production and are still learning. I must state that this is a modern day tale adapted to fit the budget. We have been contacted by some Sawney followers hoping it was the story of the Sawney legend but it is not on this occasion.

The movie is slick and scary and the beautiful Scottish highland scenery is starkly contrasted with the dark, visceral, and very gruesome murderous activities of Sawney and his family. The film combines a straight for the jugular approach with oodles of grim atmosphere and suspense. I'm sure audiences will be hooked, waiting to find out what exactly is in Sawney's basement...

Above: Sawney's director Ricky Wood seems like such a nice young lad. Why isn't he making Disney movies?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DIRECTED BY RICKY WOOD JNR

The audience won't have to wait for long before they see some of what goes on in Sawney's basement. There is also an investigative angle to the story as well. The film is atmospheric and displays some of Scotland's amazing locations.

Talking of the countryside, the movie isn't filmed at the actual supposed site of Sawney's cave and its surrounding hillsides at Bennane Head, is it?
The film was shot Scotland-wide, using many great locations to give the film a cinematic feel. We did not shoot at the actual sites I'm afraid. Due to budget restraints, we built sets underground in Aberdeen. This was more cost effective for us since the crew lives there.

I like the angle you've taken, updating the Bean legend to the present day by introducing the descendants of Sawney and his clan, and David Hayman as the latest incarnation truly encapsulates the degenerate horror and madness of the character. It's an idea I pursued myself in my own take on the legend in the novel *The Bloody Man*. Did you feel compelled to follow the facts of the legend closely or did you just unleash your imaginations and go for a wild ride, considering that this is very much an updated version of the story?
The story is a very updated version but there is still much of the depravity in there. Cannibalism, abduction, mutilation and incest to name but a few.

I love the modern aspects you've introduced, using a clever updating of the trappings associated with the legend; Sawney riding around in a black taxi cab in search of victims, and the two sons look like feral hoodies with particularly bloodthirsty habits. Was this a conscious comment on some of the more misguided youth of today? What inspired you to use the taxi cab?
We were thinking of the best, most efficient way to abduct young women. We thought why not use a black cab prowling the cities. Young women after a night out flag taxis down and get in without anyone paying much attention.

The movie is bursting with gruesome make up effects, severed limbs and heads on stakes etc. Were you determined to pursue practical rather than CGI effects?
We did prefer practical effects to keep it looking real. CGI is great if you have the budget for truly photorealistic effects. Maybe one day.

This is your first full length feature film, and it's a gory horror, obviously. Is this a direction you would choose to continue in, or do you envision branching out into other genres?
We are open to tackling all genres. We chose this for our first film as we felt the story was highly marketable and could be done on our doorstep.

I understand you have plans to make a contemporary version of the Sawney legend as a complimentary piece to *Flesh of Man.* How are plans proceeding with that?
We are developing the script at the moment but it's going to require a far bigger budget than this one. We are going to tackle another film or two before that one to make sure we have the resources to do the legend justice.

Can you tell us about the casting? With the exception of David Hayman, are they all new to the industry?
As well as David Hayman there is Sam Feeney, Gavin Mitchell and William Houston among others. Sam has featured in commercials, shorts and recently some more features that are in production. Gavin has quite a following in Scotland as Bobby the barman in *Still Game*. Will Houston has a great presence and has starred in *Clash of the Titans* and the *Sherlock Holmes* movies and many more. The are other great performances by Shian Denovan an Lizzie Brown.

I understand your father wrote the script and produced. Whose idea was it to film a Sawney Bean story, and how did you find working with your father?
Just like the Beans we have a family business. My brother Ranald shot the movie and my dad created the makeup and prosthetics. We all had input in the movie. Working as a family can be great but tough at times.

The movie has a genuine aura of dread about it, but I can see why you were tempted to leaven the horror with a touch of comedy, and it actually works nicely. Handled badly, the idea of a family of inbred cannibals could easily have descended into farce if the throttle was eased just a little too much....
Depending on how sick you are there is some dark humour in there. I have seen various reactions from people to some of the more graphic scenes, some can't look at the screen while others love it!

Besides Sawney and his family, there is another 'monster' in the film, this one more literal.
The thing in the cellar has a name – Ma...

The scenery is stunning, and provides all the production value you could wish for. Was the movie expensive to make and did you have to cut some stuff you would have liked to include through budgetary reasons, considering it's an independent and self-financed Scottish feature?
The film was very low budget but I feel we have achieved a look that makes it look bigger budget than it actually is. We shot on our Red One camera and gave the film a real cinematic look. In my opinion, when making a low budget film everything is a compromise. You just have to try the best you can with what resources and time you have. Sometimes it's frustrating because you would like something to look bigger or better or need more time. We have cut a lot out of the film that looked great on screen, purely for pacing reasons.

Finally, It's very satisfying that the Sawney legend is in Scottish hands, rather than being distorted by any potential Hollywood vision of how the story should be.
I thought it was important that Sawney was played by a Scotsman and I couldn't think of anyone better than David Hayman. He plays a great character who really adds to the movie.

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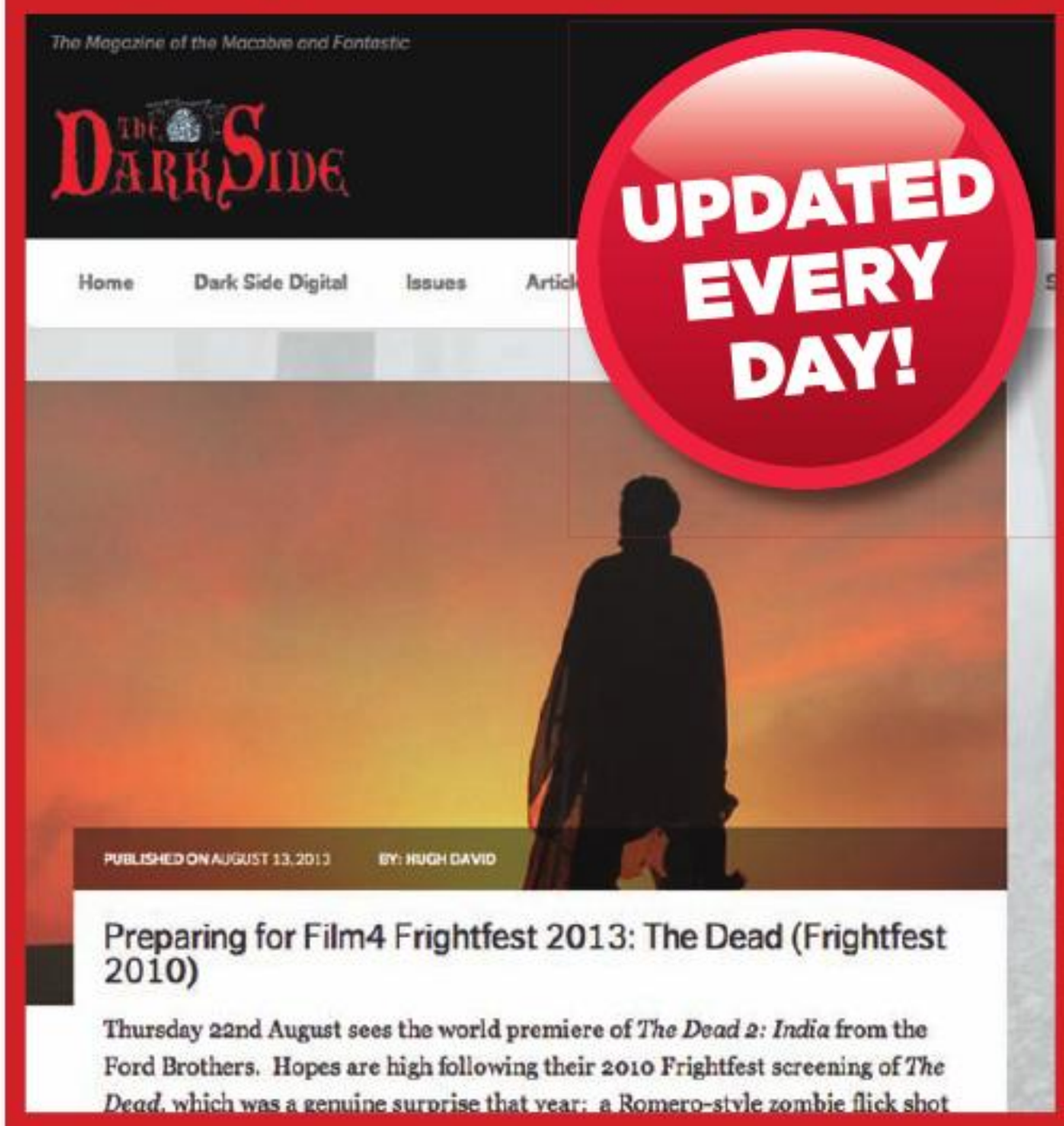
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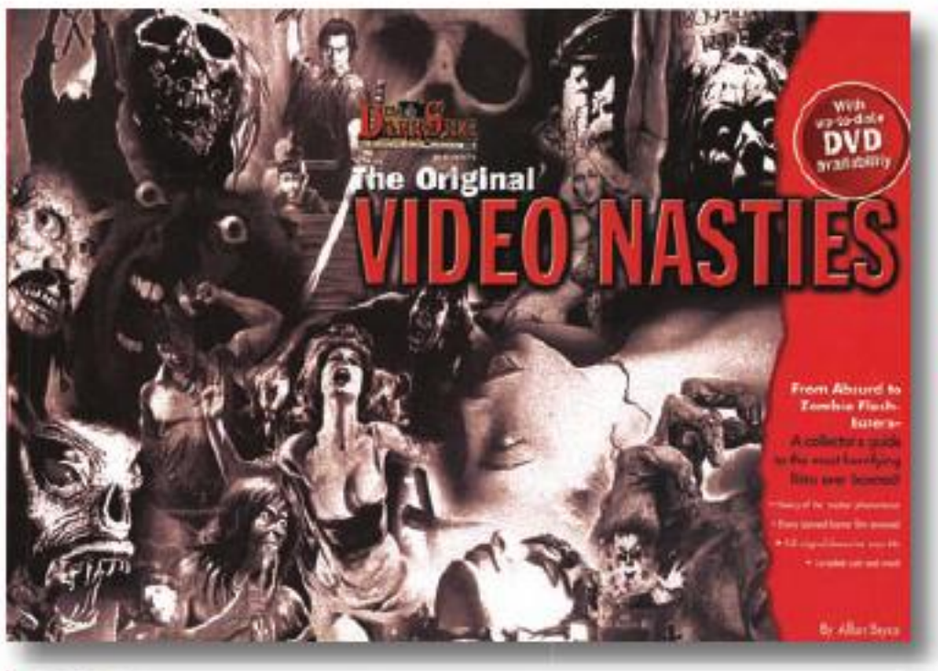

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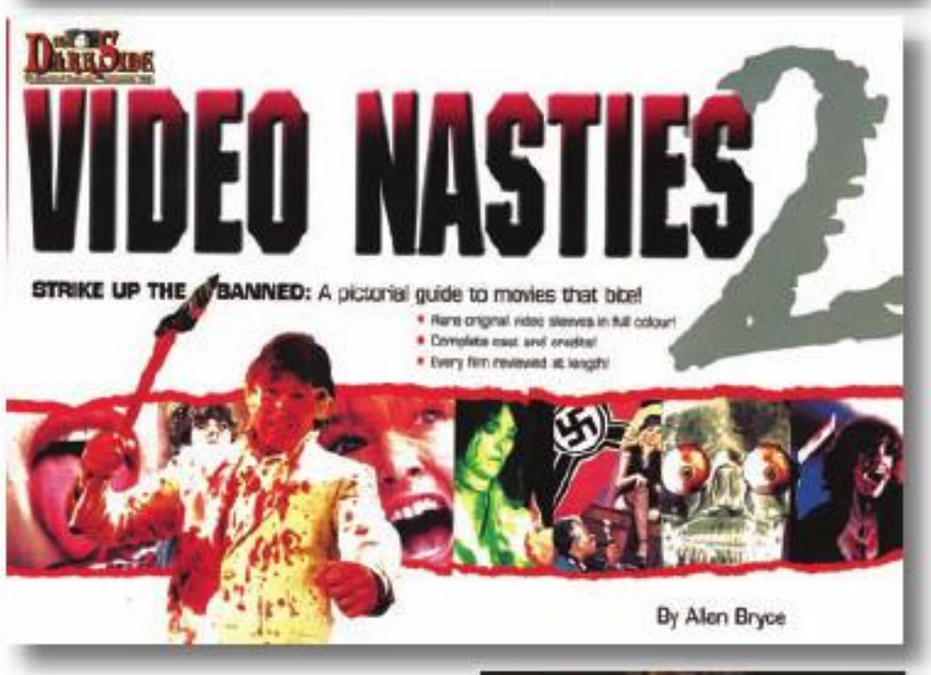

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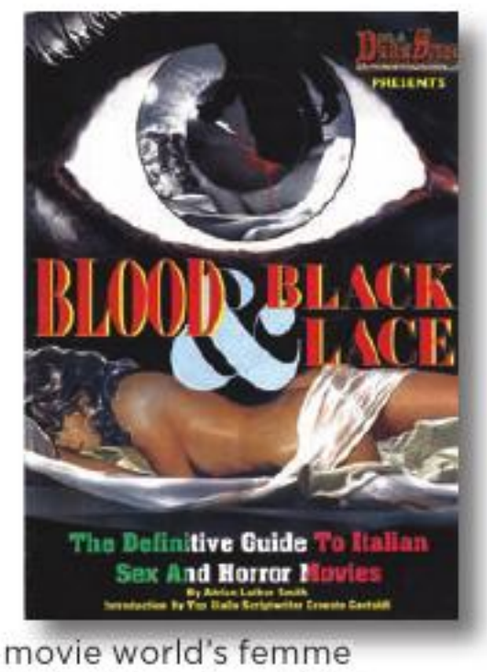

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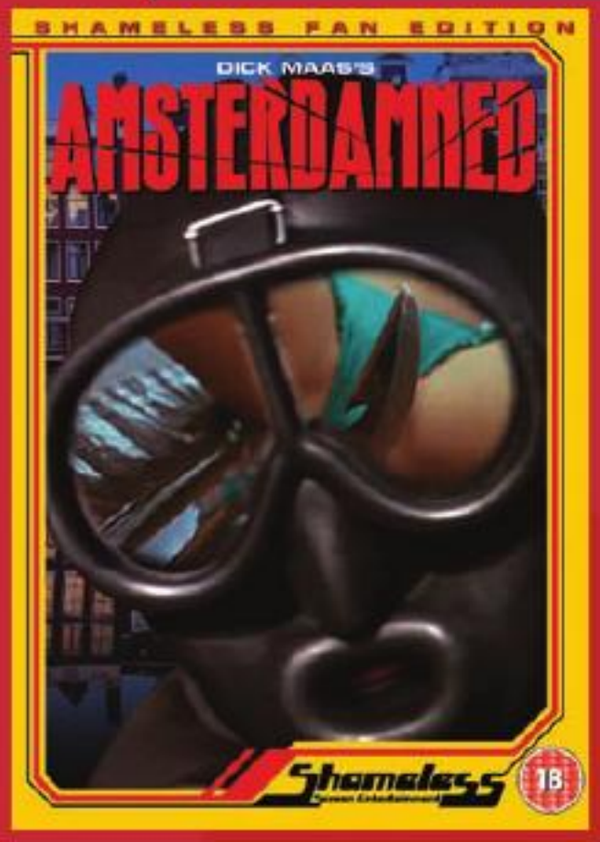

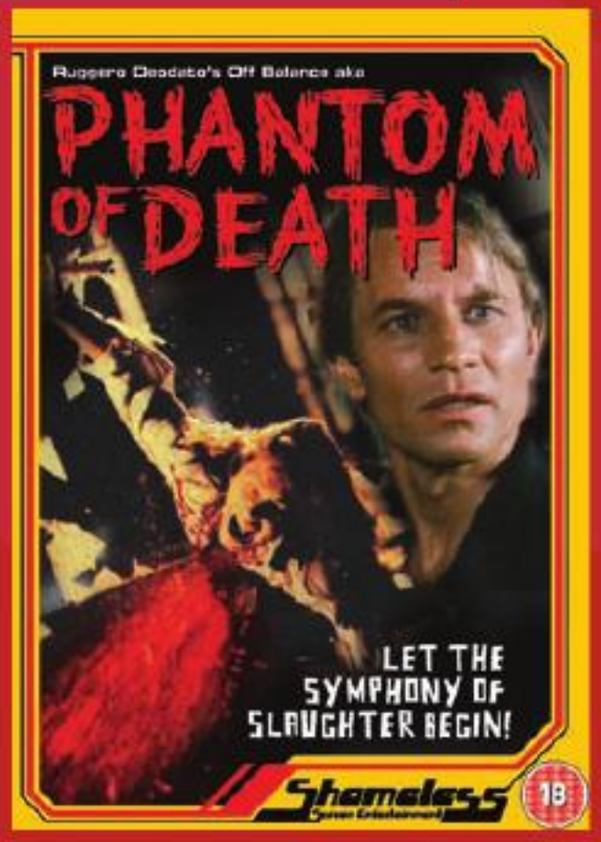

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The titles to choose from are as follows:

Amsterdamned: This action-packed suspense shocker from director Dick (*The Lift*) Maas is about a maniac in a frogman's outfit prowling the canals of Amsterdam, leaping out to murder people at random. There are echoes of *Jaws* in the scenario and the speedboat chase finale is an action highlight. Sleek and stylish, this is a real Dutch treat!

The House On The Edge Of The Park: This sleazy shocker stars *Last House On The Left* psycho David Hess as a crazed rapist who, along with his brain-dead mate John Morghen, terrorises a group of spoiled yuppies after gate-crashing a party in a posh mansion. One rich kid is thrown into the swimming pool and when he tries to climb out Hess urinates on him. Torture, rape, lesbianism and a 9mm castration are on the menu here in a famed video nasty that is essential viewing.

Phantom Of Death: When he discovers that he is losing his hair, Michael York doesn't just go out and buy a syrup - he goes bonkers and starts killing people! The gore starts from the opening credits, with a splattery neck-slicing and a woman having her head forced through a window. Gorgeous scream queen Edwige Fenech joins the reliable Donald Pleasence, who plays a retiring cop on hand to investigate the crimes, in a stylish giallo from the director of *Cannibal Holocaust*.

Dark Side Overseas Subscription Rates:
Europe 6-issue subs: £35 12-issues: £60.
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Single issues available (141, 142, then 149 onwards): USA/Canada/ Rest of World: £8.50 each. Europe: £7 each.

Are you getting it regularly? If not, why not? You will find *The Dark Side* in most major newsagents throughout the UK. However, we all know that Britain's legendary Magazine of the Macabre and Fantastic is likely to sell out pretty quickly, and the safest way to guarantee you don't miss out is to take a subscription, in the process saving yourself both money and shoe leather!

FREE DARK SIDE DVD OFFER

If you take a 12-issue subscription we will also send you a fantastic new horror DVD from the *Shameless* video vaults. When it comes to cult horror, *Shameless* are the company that rule the roost, with an amazing catalogue of genre titles you can check out at www.shameless-films.com. We have teamed up with *Shameless* to offer readers a great choice from three of their top releases, all beautifully remastered with extras. Simply pick the title you want the most and we'll send it out to you absolutely FREE... providing you take a 12-issue subscription. Offer only available to readers based in the UK.

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THE INCREDIBLE MELTON MAN

Rick Melton could be described as charming, intelligent and witty. And who knows, perhaps one day he will be? Here the artistic legend who's down to earth but not quite far enough gives us a rare glimpse into his millionaire lifestyle...

My web site boasts the words: "No Job Too Demeaning," and even a cursory glance at the images therein leaves no doubt that Stunningly Savage trawls for work in murkier waters than most.

A few sensitive souls have taken me to task over this endless stream of smut, but I'm an exploitative artist through and through, and even though I attempt to divert criticism by bemoaning the fact that nobody ever asks me to paint children and dogs, we all know that I'd run a mile if anyone did.

Still, I'm beginning to think that perhaps I've skidded a little too far south of decency, because after spending the last two months painting horny dwarfs, cannibalistic hookers and women with killer slugs up their chuffs I'm totally smutted out. Even worse all this trashy fare has left me with no movie to go at this issue, unless we get stuck into some dwarf porn and I don't foresee a whole lot of laughs in that.

So, for this month only, I'm going to change tack and let you in on the ups and downs of being an illustrator in the exploitation and horror business. No, don't just flip over the page. It won't do you any good anyway because you're right at the end of the magazine and you've nowhere else to go. Besides, I promise you it won't be as painful as you think and if you're considering getting into commercial illustration you'll be able to avoid all of the scummy puddles that I've trodden in.

So, let's start with the scummiest puddle of all, *GoreZone* magazine. I'm not referring to the classic USA publication of course, but the unbelievably shitty British one. God help you if your first illustration job is for a bunch of tossers like this.

My studio still houses dozens of sketches and oils done to accompany *GoreZone* articles which were so appallingly bad that your arse would go on strike if you tried to wipe it with 'em.

I rang up the editor several times to question whether he was actually going to publish his latest batch of dyslexic drivel but I always seemed to catch him in the middle of some gigglefest with his best chum so all I'd get is:

"Oooooohhh... no...get off.....STOP IT!!! No, seriously....ooooo....well, yes, somebody wrote it so we'll print it..... Ooooooowwwww!! No! Get off...get off.....get OFF...oooooOOOHHHHH!!!!!"

GoreZone used to run an ad that featured director Jake West sitting on the toilet with the words "*GoreZone* is the shit!" written above his head. Take out one word and Jake's quote would have been spot on.

As you saw in my ad last issue, I'm at present doing a lot of covers for trash horror distributors Mongrel Video. Mongrel personifies all that is admirable about sleazy DVD distribution. Based in Texas, the company is run by two bums who spend half their time trying to score biker chicks at tattoo conventions and the other half getting beaten up by bikers. This means that despite having a plethora of great titles, they never actually get around to releasing anything.

Still, the money's good and it's great to work for people who truly believe that no film is so bad that a Rick Melton cover can't sell it.

And of course, they're right! But life sucks, so it won't be long before those Mongrel boys, Ezra and Eric, are discovered tits-up in some sweaty Texas tattoo parlour, bloated, stiff and riddled with septicaemia.

Naturally this will put your Uncle Rick back into the snake pit, hustling for jobs amongst his many and more-Photoshop-savvy peers.

However, all this computer art isn't as big a problem as you'd think. True, I can't match the photo perfect imagery of my digital doodling chums and unlike them I can't just hit 'undo' every time I muck up, but that's OK because art should be a reflection of life and as we all know, life is one long fuck up.

Let's face it, you can't just hit an 'undo' button when your wife walks into her sister's bedroom and finds you there with your face buried in her sibling's panty drawer. Sure, it's a shameful, filthy and depraved scene, but it's also one that your wife will want to recall time and time again, especially when you have friends over for dinner.

But enough of Brycie and his humiliating first visit to meet his in-laws. Let's get stuck into Arrow Video!

Arrow was the biggest gig I ever got, so naturally I did everything I could to get fired

from it! One problem was that I'd only been painting professionally for a couple of years when Almar Haflidason (of the now-defunct Associates PR company) contacted me about doing Arrow's covers. I knocked out the first three in no time and over the next couple of years did about 25 more. Most of them were pretty ordinary but occasionally I'd throw off a good one. None of them rate with my *Dark Side* stuff. I would have done a better job if I was aware how much people loved and revered the movies I was doing. I thought they were all just badly dubbed European cack. Unfortunately I said so in a couple of interviews. Dumbass!

Up until my faux pas I was on a one way street to fame, riches and *The Jonathan Ross Show*. I even had a groupie!

Arrow was paying me well for the images and private customers were gobbling up the originals. I was doing so well that I went out and ordered myself a new Land Rover. Then I shot off my big mouth, got fired and had to chop it in for a Belingo! Actually, I say I got fired. In truth I've never talked with anyone from Arrow Video so I'm not sure what went on there. I know they split from The Associates who'd hired me, and then they brought out *Bare Behind Bars* with a cover done by someone else. As you can imagine, after having to sit through nearly 30 titles that featured bad English actors talking out of even worst Italian actors' mouths I was somewhat miffed when a title that had Rick Melton written all over it went to someone else.

I was even more miffed when it came out, because it boasted artwork that resembled a safety manual illustration!

But I'm not bitter. Shortly after that they hired a super talented illustrator with an incomparable pedigree and an amazing resume. I wish him nothing but happiness. In fact if some twisted individual were to throw a live toaster into his pool while he was cooling his feet I'd be devastated and the first to commiserate with his wife. If he had one. But he doesn't.

I have one though, and she's got great cans which means that WE don't have to argue over who's going to be the girl when we shoot OUR reference photos.

So there.

Talking of Sally, she's hitting 50 now but she still looks good (*as you can see from her picture above*) despite crawling through trash for *Maniac Cop*, getting her throat slit by Peter Cushing for *Corruption*, getting axed for *Hatchet* and being mutilated and Nazi'd up for a myriad other brutal scenarios.

Naturally I change her likeness occasionally but otherwise I don't have to enhance her much at all. Which proves that all her Satan worshipping is paying off!

I think my best DVD covers are for Elektrocity, probably because unlike Arrow I deal with them personally. *Inferno*, *Anguish* and *Requiem for a Vampire* would probably top the list. The *Inferno* cover I did for Arrow nearly got me lynched! Here's some good advice for budding designers; don't go sticking big fat bare arses on the covers of treasured Argento classics.

Right, on to *The Dark Side* magazine! Working for *DS* is a labour of love. It has to be because the money sucks. But hey, my articles suck!

Still, there is no doubt in my mind that Allan Bryce presides over the best horror magazine on the planet. On the minus side he can also be the rudest XXXX on the planet!

I don't think I've ever rang him when he's not "just out the door". He must spend every waking moment hurtling through doors. About two years ago I actually managed to have a brief conversation with him regarding a fee for a particular cover. For some reason the artwork had taken longer than usual so I rang him to discuss money.

After I finished talking there was a long silence followed by a heavy thud which I assumed was Brycie escaping through one of his many doors. It wasn't until four days later that I found out from Yannie that he'd swallowed his tongue!

Sometimes I'll go all girly and tell him that I'm going elsewhere for bigger bucks but *The Dark Side* is the Hotel California of publications. You check out but the next day you're still there, slogging away over yet another sweat-stained cover. But then, who'd want to leave? For a niche publication that many still struggle to find in their local newsagent (I discovered my first *DS* tucked up in the rafters behind a copy of *Jugs Monthly*!) it brims over with talent. I'm perfectly aware that I'm the worst thing in it but even I've been reasonably successful through association.

But enough of this brown nosing. Let's hit book illustration! I've done hundreds of paintings and sketches for books and magazines in the last six years or so. All filthy of course. But I did get contacted by one respectable company. Please allow me to quote from my hugely successful book, *Stunningly Savage, The Art of Rick Melton. A Book of Blood and Sluts.*

".....enjoy all this smut while you can because I've been invited to contribute to the *Big, Bumper Book of Faeries*. Honestly, I'm not pulling your plonkers; I've got the email right here and I swear this is 100% genuine.

"Hi Rick. My name is .... and I'm compiling artwork for the *Big, Bumper Book of Faeries*. We have some of the world's leading fantasy and faerie artists on board and we'd love something from you. We are after paintings that portray all aspects of Faerie lives. Of course part of their life is spent procreating so we need an illustration of faeries having sex and none of the other artists will do it. Can you help us out? There will be no payment but the publicity will be considerable." I bet it will!

So there you have it. My very first assignment for a respectable publication and it consists of two fairies fucking. I can't wait till it comes out!

It's no wonder I never got that job animating *Peppa Pig*!"

Finally, commissions. Again I've done many. Again, they are all smutty, with not a child, puppy or frolicking pony amongst them. Having said that, I did get suspended from school for sketching actress Alexandra Bastedo with a pony, but needless to say it wasn't a *National Velvet* type scenario.

The muckiest commissions I ever did were of a Ukrainian girl who worked for a company called Laptastic. Her boyfriend thought she was really hot stuff but believe me, she wasn't. Anyway, the pair of them sent me a stream of pornographic images which I happily rendered in graphite at eighty quid a pop.

Well, this went on for several weeks and then the girl decided she wanted her sketches put up on my site. At this time my web host was already being deluged with complaints (mostly from my mother) so I decided to censor her slightly by Photoshopping a few butterflies over her lady parts. The next day I received an irate email from her screaming in big, fat text "DOS YOUR WIFE HAVE INSEX IN HER PUSY?"

God, I bloody hope not!

So there you have it. A journey through the wonderful world of exploitive art. All that remains for me now is to guide you towards my new website www.stunninglysavage.com which of course, will leave you all feeling cheap and dirty. If I can relieve you of some of your cash in the process then my work is truly done!

IN THE NEXT FANTASTIC ISSUE

Following hot on the heels of our BBC2 Horror Double Bills, we've commissioned Denis Meikle to take an equally exhaustive look at the history of Horror Double Bill cinema releases! It will be a terrifying trip down memory lane for some, an education for others! We'll also be bringing you the second part of John Hamilton's awesome history of Tigon Films, as well as the Tony Tenser story. John Martin will be chatting with Hammer's Madeline Smith and we'll be checking out Grindhouse's Corruption, a Peter Cushing classic from the 60s, being released at last in a totally uncut form. If he gets it typed up in time, Calum Waddell will bringing us one of the last ever interviews with the late, great Karen Black, and there are many more shocking surprises in store in our Halloween issue of The Dark Side, on sale in all good newsagents and probably a lot of bad ones too!

THE DARK SIDE

Issue 156 on sale 24th October

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Described by Kim Newman as 'the most obscure British Horror movie ever made', this stylish slasher with a satirical bite finally gets its long-overdue premiere on the BFI's celebrated Flipside label.

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Extras include the 1971 horror fantasy *The Insomniac*, and a feature length interview with *Sleepwalker* director Saxon Logan.

Released 23 September

For *Sleepwalker* screenings visit scalarama.com

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bfi.org.uk

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